copy 2
PZ
3
B5682
B

FT MEADE
GenColl

Class PZ3
Book .B518a
Copyright No. B

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.
copy a

The Black American

by

MRS. FLORENCE MOSS BLACKWELL

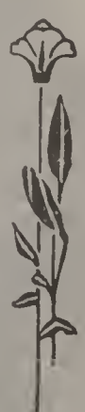
Copyright Applied For.

2

The Black American

BY

MRS. FLORENCE MOSS BLACKWELL



PHOENIX PRINTING COMPANY
864 BROAD STREET
AUGUSTA, GA.

673
1895

Copy 2

PZ3
.B5684
B
cop2

©CL.A512538

CHAPTER ONE

"Walla, I want you to have a new dress for the reception, next Thursday night. You have worn that gray dress to threads almost."

"But mamma, I do not care for a new dress. Why should I lose so much time and spend so much money on clothes when there is so much needed for the comfort of our boys? They will soon be drafted, and called to the battlefields in France, where they will need many things to comfort and cheer them in their darkest hours." She said this with a pathetic note in her voice, as her soft, dark eyes wandered to a photo on her dressing-table.

Walla sat arranging her hair as her mother entered the room. The room was a tasty and daintily arranged bed-room. The furniture was mahogany, draperies of old-rose colors draped the windows, divan chairs and cushions, a few pictures and instructive mottoes hung about upon the walls; which all showed the taste and spirit of its occupant.

"Mamma, I believe that I will become a Red Cross nurse; I saw in the 'Chicago Defender' last week where they would admit Negro nurses now for overseas duties."

"Walla, whatever put such a monstrous idea in your head? You are entirely too capricious here of late. This restless and discontented state of mind is evidently due to idleness. I shall see that your father gives you a position at once. You need employment." With a hurried movement and a feverish determination, made visible by her gestures, Mrs. Davis left the room, closing the door sharply behind her.

Walla, with her heavy suit of dark brown hair falling in a mass about her beautiful brown face and slender shoulders, pushed back the shiny locks from her face, as her soft dark eyes looked full into those in the mirror, as she said, cutely:

"Walla, do you think that you have a very trying time with a mother who is so ambitious for her daughter to be a real society-lady, instead of a nice, sweet and gentle nurse for Uncle Sam?"

Walla was gazing into the mirror that reflected her face, which was wreathed in a bewitching smile, while she made gestures as she spoke.

"But then you know, Walla, that she is the very best of mothers; she is only desirous that her daughter get her full share of life's pleasures, as she has so often told you, that she never knew what real childhood was. That her youth was crowded with hardships, as she had no mother. So be patient and deal gently with her, always remembering that mother's love is pure and unspotted."

"But she doesn't know that Gastonia is going to volunteer, and if he goes to France, Walla Davis must be found somewhere near him, even on the battlefields where carnage and bloodshed must be the soldier's portion."

Walla had taken a three years' course in Nurse-Training at Spelman Seminary. But until now she had not been actively engaged in the work which she was so well fitted for. She finished her college course at Spelman.

Being the only child, Doctor and Mrs. Davis humored Walla's every whim, and she was given every advantage possible to a girl of her age. She possessed a rare beauty and a personality that won for her a host of friends wherever she went. Walla was truly competent, as she possessed extraordinary ability.

She vied with Gastonia Bessington on the rostrum of the chapel the day of their graduation. From that day they became fast friends.

Gastonia's gallantry and veracity won for him a warm place in Walla's heart. And it is not strange to say that he did not dislike her any less than she did him.

Gastonia Bessington was a dark, rugged-faced young man, with a great mental capacity, who had won his way through Morehouse College; he was not handsome, but manly; his face boasted of but one thing, that it denoted strength of character, the one thing that would first attract a person to him was his radiant smile. He was naturally intelligent, tall, commanding, with the air of a leader, he was a man of purpose and willpower. Although his face was rugged it was a face to be trusted even by a child. He was a great athlete, and Morehouse College and Spelman Seminary were proud of him.

In 1916 he took up work with the Pilgrim Insurance Company as Auditor. The next year he accepted a position at Morehouse College as instructor of Latin, French and German.

CHAPTER TWO

Back at Morehouse College again, teachers and students alike greeted and welcomed Gastonia as he took up work among them again.

The boys had gathered about on the Campus, some practicing for the match game to be played between Morehouse College and Atlanta University.

As was his usual custom of taking a genuine interest in everything which concerned the pleasure and interest of the boys, Professor Bessington stood watching them intently. Often he had helped to win many a hard-fought game in football and baseball. It was his delight to foster enduring friendships among the boys and to encourage and stimulate patriotism among them.

"Well, Fess, what do you think of the morning papers?" said Jim Green, a tall brown lad of the junior class, as he gave Gastonia a slap on his broad shoulders laughingly.

"Do you think that the Negro will be called upon to fight?"

"Well, Green, I can not say; but I believe we will play a large part in this war before it closes. We do not want to fight, we want peace at all costs; we want it so earnestly that we may be called upon to fight for it."

"We want the 'Democracy' of America to mean something for the Negro. The Negro is a peace-loving race, but it may be he will be forced to fight for 'His Democracy.'

"If we are called upon to fight, I want every black boy in America to shoulder arms and fight to the last man, if needs be, remembering that he is fighting for 'Democracy' for the Negro.

"We do not know what the next day may bring forth, but when the cry comes for the Negro to do his bit, we will be ready to do our best, as we have always done."

Jim was visibly affected by the earnest voice of his teacher.

"If war is declared on Germany it will be no more than we could expect. Germany has insulted this country and has given her so many direct slaps that I fear its endurance can last but a short time longer. A country, like a race or individual, must resent certain insults or be branded as cowards.

"So you see that war with Germany seems inevitable, I fear, Green, and if America fights, the Negro must fight, for we are Black Americans, are we not Green?"

"Oh, yes—er yes, sir," said Jim, in a half stammering tone.

This conversation took place about the middle of November. That afternoon Professor Bessington strolled from the Campus and boarded a car for the city, as Morehouse College was about thirty minutes' ride to the city.

Jim Green happened to tbe on the same car. As they left the car at the corner of Peachtree and Decatur Streets, a swarm of newsboys were shrieking:

"Extras, extras. America threatens break of diplomatic relations with Germany! War is sure!" they cried with yells that fairly rent the air.

Professor Bessington ran his hand in his pocket and handed a boy five cents for a paper, opened it, and began to read the fresh headlines which were barely dry from the press.

"Well, it looks black, doesn't it, Fess?" Gastonia looked up suddenly to see young Green gazing intently upon the paper.

"I am afraid so, Green," he said soberly.

America suddenly found herself in the clutches of a terrible suspense. War clouds, thick and heavy, were gathering about the darling spot of Freedom.

The Christmas Holidays came and found a peaceful atmosphere pervading the entire country, in spite of the impending danger.

Gastonia spent the holidays in Augusta with Walla. As Mrs. Davis had said:

"Walla appeared capricious," and always Gastonia was at a loss to understand her whims and change of moods. He had felt sure she would enjoy his short visit, but instead she appeared indifferent and almost cold towards him. It puzzled him to find a reason for her moods. So he felt that he must give up all hope of ever calling her his wife.

Still there were times when her affectionate little body would tell him, by every gesture, that she loved him, and when he would go off into the third heaven of delight that she would, without excuse, refuse to see him for a whole week.

So, perplexed, and without knowing what to decide for his future with Walla, he decided to volunteer and enter the Officers'

Training Camp at Des Moines, Iowa. Gastonia had had four years of military training in one of the best Northern Military Schools in America, and he felt that he was well fitted to serve Uncle Sam after the proper training at camp.

He returned to Atlanta only to hand in his resignation, as he would return to Augusta the latter part of February.

Several years prior to this time, Gastonia had spent several months abroad. In 1911 he traveled with a very rich man during the summer. He spent much time in England, France and Germany. Although a friendly spirit seemed to pervade the countries visited, Gastonia learned that they were virtually at war. At least Germany was ready to declare war on France at the least provocation. But France, like a wise woman dealing with a contrary husband, simply ignored every effort on Germany's part to start war. For France knew that her silence was the best wisdom to display at that time.

Gastonia was almost constantly with his employer and he learned that England, France and Germany were filled with spies, and that preparation for war was evident by the increase in the Navy and Army of each country. Still each country seemed eager for peace for all times.

Gastonia was receptive and possessed a responsive nature. He was thrown a great deal with the Foreign Detective Agency, as his employer's business seemed largely with them. So he was able to get many helpful hints as to making discoveries that seemed to most people impossible.

This opportunity proved the greatest help to him in after years when he was called upon to serve his race and his country. It was the one treasured secret of his life that he had been permitted to take this trip. He visited many homes with his employer; one of the homes visited was destined to prove of the greatest benefit to him in making some daring discoveries. He laid many plans while waiting in the hallway and on the ground floor of this certain house for his employer. He felt sure that if war was declared and if he was permitted to land in France that he would prove of the greatest help to his country and a pride to his race.

He laid up all the knowledge he could store away for a future day, as the countries he visited seemed to have been doing.

Gastonia felt that America would eventually have to fight, and was glad.

CHAPTER THREE

The 25th of February Professor Bessington took leave of the teachers and students of Morehouse College and Spelman Seminary and started for Augusta, where he would bid Walla good-bye and leave for camp.

The coach which carried him to Augusta, for once was not crowded. He stretched himself out and began to read the paper. Soon his hands relaxed and his head bent backward, the paper fell from his hands and with his head resting on the cushioned seat, he was soon lost in dreams. Dreaming that Walla had married, and had left the city on the train that pulled out of the station just as his train steamed in.

He slept almost all the way to Augusta, awaking with a disgusting feeling that he was left all alone in the world.

As the train steamed its way into the station, he aroused himself and gathered up his baggage to leave the train, when all at once his eyes wandered to the window, and the first person he saw waiting in the crowd was Walla, with her eyes sparkling and a sweet smile lingering about her pretty mouth.

She could not see him, but his eyes feasted upon her upturned face with a ravishing delight that made his whole being quiver with satisfaction.

As Walla waited for Gastonia to appear and descend the steps, she suddenly caught sight of the manly figure as he descended the steps and made his way to her side. To her he was the same honorable man of old, with his radiant smile encircling his broad mouth.

"I am sure nothing is more surprising than this," said Gastonia, as he rushed forward and caught Walla in his arms, letting his baggage fall to the ground at his side.

For a moment Walla was as a stature, then her modest eyes drooped, and she accepted the warm love-kisses which Gastonia imprinted upon her upturned lips. They then went side by side from the station, chatting gayly and entered her father's car, which she had left waiting.

Soon they reached the happy home, where Walla had a sumptuous dinner awaiting. After dinner, Walla asked her father if she

might use the large car, and if she might drive herself. Doctor Davis consented, and Walla told Gastonia that they would spend the afternoon driving, and asked where he would like to go.

"Well, if I am to have my choice, I will suggest that we drive down through 'Lover's Lane' and down by the water's edge."

Although it was near the end of February, the day was warm and balmy and much like the beautiful days which greet us in early spring.

The drive was more than delightful to Gastonia. Walla was unusually amiable, and Gastonia allowed himself to enjoy to the fullest the felicity of that transient hour spent with her unchangeable mood.

All the orchestra of Nature was still, save for the noise of the automobile in which they were driving. As they drove along leisurely down through the wooded grove of trees, laden with withered moss, they came to the water's edge where the Savannah River flowed on silently by the wooded banks of South Carolina and Georgia.

Walla brought her car to a standstill on the edge of the bank, the front wheels of the car touching the water. They looked about them in silence, so impressive was the scene before them.

Gastonia's silence betrayed his heart even more than his spoken words had done. Walla guessed what he was thinking about, but she was determined not to help him in his effort to say what was uppermost in his mind to say to her.

She was right, for towering above, like a frowning mountain, was the painful thought that he loved Walla with his whole soul and wanted to ask her to become his wife, but he felt sure that she would reject him, if for no other reason than because he had asked her.

Suddenly he could bear the strain no longer. He threw his arms about Walla and with a long and full embrace, he whispered:

"Walla, I love you; I love you. You must marry me; I can not do without you; you must become my wife, my sweetest love."

Just then, a long line of farmers and trades people came towards the water's edge to cross on the Ferry.

Walla drew herself up, cranked her car, turned and started for the city. It all happened so suddenly that for a moment Walla's actions showed nervousness.

Gastonia felt sure that Walla hated him more than ever for his awkwardness. He seemed possessed with a terrible uncertainty concerning his success with her. The disgust that filled his heart at that moment was almost beyond endurance.

But it was all because we mortal beings have not the power of knowing the hearts of those whom we mingle with.

Walla was far from being capricious, but she often assumed that attitude towards many, to be able to carry out some of her most noble purposes. And at this particular time she had many reasons for appearing changeable.

No greater heart nor nobler soul lived in a being than pulsated in the breast of Walla Davis. Her ideals, her ideas and her ambitions made her appear restless to those who were not given to deep thinking.

CHAPTER FOUR.

The living-room and spacious halls of Doctor and Mrs. Davis' home were ablaze with the golden rays of electric lights.

Gastonia would leave for camp on the early morning train, and Walla had spared no pains in making arrangements for the farewell reception in his honor.

Mrs. Davis had, without Walla's knowledge, ordered one of the prettiest evening dresses conceivable from the "J. B. White" Department Store. As Walla was about to get out of one of her so-called best dresses, Mrs. Davis pulled a box from under Walla's bed and presented it to her smilingly, and waited to see the result of the surprise.

"Oh, mamma!" said Walla, as she lifted the soft silky dress of flesh crepe de chine from the box.

"You are satisfied, then? Do you like it?"

"Like it, mamma? Why, it is divine; it is simply a dream! There never was such a beautiful dress in the whole wide world, I am sure.

"I am very happy tonight, and my sweetest of mothers has proven to be my Fairy God-mother.

"After all, mamma, I am not so old-timey; I did want very much to have a pretty dress for this occasion, but I wanted to save my money for a purpose, and I was determined to make the sacrifice."

Throwing the dress gently upon the bed, Walla went over to her mother and threw her arms around her. "Mamma, I am very happy, and I mean to try harder than ever before to live out the best there is in me, for your and Daddy's dear sakes. And because I am sure that God wants me to be both noble and good, and prove it by serving Humanity."

"But mamma, I do wish that you were willing for me to go as a Red Cross Nurse." She stood apart from her mother, with both hands resting upon her mother's shoulders. She looked with her most bewitching smile into her mother's eyes.

"Walla, my darling," said Mrs. Davis, softly, with all the beautiful mother-love shining in her eyes, "enjoy your life while you are

young; gather the roses while you may, for the dark days with their gray shadow will come when you may no longer be happy as now, my dear darling.

"Do not hurry to leave mother's side for the rough, cold world; for the world is cruel and has no mercy for a woman, Walla. And who knows but that you may arrive in France safely, all right, but to be treated as the French and Belgium women?

"Walla, my heart is set on you. Should you make a failure of the life which God has given you, it would break my heart. I do not want you to hurry into married life, either, as it also has its sunshine and its shadows, and when the clouds of disappointments come you may not be able to stand their falling shadows."

"Oh, mamma, please do not take life so seriously. I am sure that God will take care of me and watch tenderly over me wherever He may send me. My sweetest and best of mothers that you are, you wish everything that a fond and devoted mother could wish for her daughter. And I am going to prove worthy of all you could ever hope for me. I am going to enjoy life to its fullest by being of the best possible service to God by serving mankind; and mamma, you may rest assured that your Walla will not marry until she has your consent and the man must be a true Black American that should dare wed your Georgia rosebud; ha, ha, ha.

"Now, how did you like that little speech, Mrs. Seriousness?

"Now, mamma, I am sure that your experiences have been the stepping-stones to the making of your true and noble character. So why not let me go to France and nurse our boys and give them the tender care which only a colored nurse can give to the Negro soldier? If it comes hard to me, why not let me have my share of the world's hardships now while I am young and able to withstand them? Then I will be better able to spend a peaceful old age. But since the world is in such a tumult we can not be really happy, while others are sorrowing over their lost. Death on the battlefield may not come to us, as Daddy is too old and we have no son or brother, but it is coming to our neighbors; they will weep and sorrow for their dead and wounded upon the battlefield, and it is our duty to make the sacrifice of all ages and serve our Negro boys and their heart-broken wives, mothers, sisters—and—and sweethearts."

Walla again put her arms about her mother's waist in a pretty,

protecting way, and laid her soft cheek against her mother's with a caressing little gesture.

"Walla, are you in love with Gastonia Bessington?" spoke Mrs. Davis, suspiciously.

Walla shook her head and said pettishly: "No—o; of course not, ma-mere; not exactly, only I like him pretty well.

"There now; 'I done told you,' as Uncle Ben says."

Walla's form trembled perceptibly. "There, now, mamma, dear; what a selfish and thoughtless daughter I am to have kept my mother standing all this time.

"Here, sit down while I adorn my beautiful gown in honor of M—er, mamma, of course, for you are the sweetest mother in the wide world. But I almost said Mr. Bessington, as he is the guest of honor tonight. You aren't jealous, are you, mamma, dear?"

Walla spoke playfully, but it was evident that she was somewhat confused by the partial confession of her interest in Gastonia to her mother.

CHAPTER FIVE

It was a beautiful, heart-breaking night, no moon, but a perfect canopy of stars in a deep blue sky, made the night bewitching.

Walla's friends and Gastonia's friends had gathered at Walla's bidding to make merry on the eve of Gastonia's departure for camp.

Walla left the room where the young people were flittering about by the sweet strains of music. She joined a dark-eyed young man on the steps leading to the lawn and together they walked out in the open air.

A soft wind twisted itself among the trees; the fragrance of unseen flowers greeted them, for although it was the last of February, Walla possessed flowers which had been taken from her mother's pit and placed about the lawn, and they had not lost their fragrance during the frost and snow of winter, for Walla had cared tenderly for them. Monthly roses and violets dared to bloom, as the weather was so spring-like; thus they perfumed the lawn for lovers that night.

Cupid seemed to have been resting its tired wings and nestling among the foliage of the trees and lurking among the unseen flowers.

"Walla, am I to leave tomorrow without knowing what the future holds for me, if God should spare me to return to you again? You are mine, are you not, Walla? he whispered passionately.

She smiled up into his face, her beautiful dark eyes full of a tender light and her head drooped.

"I am afraid it is true, Gastonia," she said, demurely.

"Then you do love me?" he cried, rapturously, drawing her closer to his heart. Her eyes drooped with shyness, as she said: "Yes, I love you, Gastonia." She whispered those words softly.

"I think that I have always loved you ever since I first knew you in college."

"And I may speak to your parents now, my darling?"

Walla shook her head dubiously; she turned away with a strange gesture.

"I am not so sure about that," she returned, a look of amusement passing over her beautiful face.

Gastonia bit his lips to suppress the disappointment. "Nice prospect for a man going to war," he said ruefully.

"Now sweetheart, let me lay down the law to you. I shall go now to your parents with the matter. If they will give their consent to give their treasure into my keeping I shall leave you with them until I am stationed, but we will be married tonight. Then when I leave for France, why, you may return home with your parents until God sends me back to you."

"In the pocket of your automobile you will find our marriage license. I bought it today, and, as I was passing Von Kamp's, I saw you when you left the car standing, so I put it in there for safe-keeping. So we marry tonight my little girl."

"Tonight!" said Walla with a frightened start. "Oh, Gastonia, that is impossible; it will spoil all my plans."

"Nothing is impossible, my darling, with two who love as we do," he said, coolly, yet the passion of his soul was in his eyes.

Feeling a sense of satisfaction and deeming it wise to let well enough alone, and without giving her a chance to refuse absolutely, he said: "Walla, why not take this waltz, the music has struck up again?"

Without a word she laid her arm on his black coat sleeve and they returned to the house, where they were soon floating away to the sweet waltz music.

As the last strains of the music ceased, Gastonia took a polite, but hurried, leave of Walla to speak to James Horton, one of his old college chums. Soon James was in search of his hat and asking for a few moments leave.

James left the house hurriedly; his eyes had a mischievous twinkle in them as he passed Walla on his way out.

CHAPTER SIX

Gertrude Langston was a lifelong friend of Walla's. She had seen Gastonia leave Walla's side, so she came over to Walla.

"Why, where is Gastonia—er—Mr. Bessington, I should say?" she began at once. "I promised to take the next dance with him, and he insisted that I spare him a few minutes afterwards, as he assured me that he wanted to talk over some serious matter with me tonight. She said this with a rippling laugh and a swift glance into Walla's face.

"Lookout, Walla; Gastonia likes to flirt, and he is fickle. He has been trying to impress me; he has been saying all sorts of sweet things to me tonight."

"I do not believe it." Walla's beautiful eyes flashed with indignant protest

Gertrude laughed outright. "What sublime trust, to be sure," she exclaimed.

"Walla, you will learn the world better when you have grown older and have seen more of it, my dear child. Whatever you do, never put your trust in a man; they are all false and fickle."

"Gastonia is not," spoke Walla with unspeakable anger burning her heart at the taunting words of this pretended friend.

"Ah, so you acknowledge that you love Gastonia?"

"Really, Walla, I am surprised that a girl of your ability and common sense could be so blind, for he has not been in earnest with you at all. I have every reason to believe that he cares a great deal for me and wants to propose to me tonight, is why he asked me to spare him a few moments after our dance together."

"It is all false, Gertrude, and you know it is," panted Walla, indignantly, as she remembered Gastonia's devotion to her for the past two years.

"Gertrude, I did not think you capable of such depravity;" with this she turned and walked away.

Sergeant Perry, an old Augusta boy who was home on a few days' leave from Camp Upton, crossed over to speak to Walla as she turned to leave Gertrude's side.

"Sergeant Perry," you look tip-top; you are at your best to-

night; where is Orietta? She likes you in khaki, doesn't she? It is becoming to the brave, you know."

Walla said this as she extended her hand to Sergeant Perry in greeting him, as he approached her.

Gertrude's dark eyes followed Walla, and a curious brassy light crept into their depths. Glancing up she saw Gastonia coming swiftly in her direction. A look of passionate love flashed into her eyes, and under her breath she muttered harshly: He is looking for her now, but he shall not find her. He shall come with me; I will make love to him and win him tonight.

"I believe he cares a little for me, anyway, for he has always been so very kind and gentle whenever he was with me.

"He shall love me; I swear it; he shall," she muttered passionately.

"Oh, Gastonia, for your sake, for your dear sake, I would lay down my life for you. All hope of happiness is gone unless I win you, and I must win tonight, as tomorrow will be too late, for you leave me perhaps forever.

"But to wear your name in a garb of mourning would be more joy to me than to have you free to choose and marry another."

Gastonia came swiftly to her side. At sight of seeing her standing there alone he stopped short.

"Why, Miss Langston, I thought Miss Davis was here? I am sure I saw her speaking with you a few moments ago.

Gastonia held a long white envelope in his hand, which he had gotten from the pocket of the automobile, after he had dispatched James on the all-important errand to notify the man of the hour.

"Yes, you did, but she is gone now; gone to walk on the lawn with Sergeant Perry. You know they are much in love with each other of late. Let's go and find them," said Gertrude playfully, eyeing Gastonia closely.

Gastonia knew Sergeant Perry to be an outrageous flirt, and army life had not served to make him any less a favorite with the ladies.

Was this the cause of Walla's indifference to him and her change of moods? He did not dream that the tale was only a fab-

rication of Gertrude's to arouse his jealousy, with a secret hope that in his pride he would turn from Walla to her, and so he did.

Most any man would have done the same as he.

Gertrude was beautiful and very fascinating in her dark olive beauty, with a wealth of light brown hair arranged about her face, which rendered her charming, for her manners were engaging and full of sympathy.

Gastonia's heart was sore. He offered Gertrude his arm and they left the house and strolled about on the moonless lawn. As they made their way out of the house, Walla saw them, for she was sitting in the swing with Sergeant Perry, talking.

On Gastonia and Gertrude walked, talking in subdued tones. "I can't imagine what's the matter with Walla," said Gertrude, pathetically, lifting her eyes to Gastonia's face.

"She seems actually absorbed in Sergeant Perry, and you know what a dreadful mistake she is making. I am afraid that he is only flirting with her. Poor little innocent Walla. You know what a dreadful flirt he is Gastonia?" Again she eyed him narrowly to see the effect of her words.

"One glance from his wonderful eyes, and a woman's heart is subjugated, slain, and lies dead within her. Poor dear Walla seems quite infatuated—"

"Stop," spoke Gastonia, in a hoarse and strained voice. "Miss Langston stop, I beg you. Don't you know, you surely must know that she and I are—"

"Very good friends? I know it. Dear me, Gastonia—Mr. Bessington, of course, everybody knows that, and I was just about to suggest that you remonstrate with Walla in regards to her infatuation.

"Really, their conduct of late makes me suspect something—ah! there they are in the swing, about to embrace each other now."

It is said that the Devil helps his own; at that moment it certainly seemed as though his Satanic Majesty had intervened to assist Gertrude Langston in her cruel scheme.

For there sitting side by side in the swing, under the bright rays of the porch light, was poor, guileless Walla, talking earnestly with Sergeant Perry.

Sergeant Perry was gazing down into her face with a tender light in those dangerous eyes. It looked for all the world like a

pure case of love-making. But this is what they were saying to each other:

"I have loved her so long, Walla; this is no flirtation this time. Do you really believe that she cares for me? Orietta is the only girl I have loved enough to call wife."

"I think she cares for you, too, Sergeant Perry. Shall I tell you why I think she does? Well, because, although she laughs at you whenever you attempt to speak of love to her, just let any one venture a slighting remark concerning you, and she will fly into a passion and defend you with all her might. Orietta is a peculiar girl, but she is very sensible."

"Walla, do you really think that there is any hope for me?"

"Why, of course I do, Mr. Pessimist," said Walla, chidingly. "A woman does not hate a man whom she watches with her whole soul in her eyes. You were talking with Ruby Tommings during the last dance and I saw her watching you, and you were flirting awfully with Ruby, you naughty boy."

"Was she?" Sergeant Perry's hands closed eagerly down upon Walla's soft brown hands and Gastonia's jealous eyes observed the action; "was she really? And when I tried to talk with her just before the dance she was so cold in her attitude towards me that felt forced to leave her, so I sought Ruby."

"Walla, will you give her this poem? I wrote it at Camp for her, just before I started for Augusta?"

"With the greatest of pleasure, I will, little Mr. Worry-Box." A folded sheet of paper fluttered from Sergeant Perry's hand into Walla's grasp; she hid it in the pocket which hung loosely from the side of her soft dress.

"I will give this to her at once; now we had better go into the house, or my guests will be wondering who has kidnapped their hostess."

"Mr. Bessington will, I am sure," said Sergeant Perry, as he opened the screen door, and Walla passed into the house, but he decided to remain on the porch. Walla turned to say something to him, and as she lifted her eyes they rested upon two figures coming leisurely up the steps. She recognized them at once under the bright rays of the porch light, Gastonia and Gertrude.

Something about their attitude made a cold chill creep over

Walla, and without saying what she had intended to Sergeant Perry, she hastened into the house.

On entering the living-room she paused and glanced eagerly about her in search of Orietta. She saw her at last, a tall, slender, dark girl, with an air of quiet dignity..

Ruth Hillard, a dainty little girl of seventeen summers, came forward to speak to Walla. After a few moments Walla asked to be allowed to go and speak with Orietta. As she made her way to Orietta's side she came face to face with Gastonia.

"Why, what on earth is the matter, Gastonia?" she said, gently. "You look annoyed or distressed; tell me what troubles you? I have the right to know, haven't I?"

Walla forgot everything she remembered, only, at that moment, that she loved Gastonia with her whole soul, as he stood looking down into her eyes with a curious expression in his truthful dark eyes.

"For reply, Miss Davis, I will ask that you supply me with pen, ink and paper, if you please." He spoke in a hoarse whisper, as he leaned wearily against the mantel.

A perplexed expression passed over Walla's beautiful brown face. She was about to ask him to explain his reason for such coolness, or rather abruptness. But intuition whispered Gertrude's name into her mind, so she remained silent.

Gastonia's face was ghastly and ghost-like. Walla's gaze told her that he was trying hard to conceal his emotions, which Gertrude alone was responsible for.

Mrs. Davis came over to Walla's side at that moment and reminded her that it was growing late, and that refreshments should be served at once.

"Walla, it is getting late, my dear. Shall we serve the refreshments? You said that you would let me know when to serve, but surely you do not realize how late it is?" Mrs. Davis spoke this in a sweet, motherly tone, as she cast a suspicious, but pleasant, glance at the two.

"Yes, mamma, and I thank you for reminding me, for I had almost forgotten that we had to refresh ourselves. I will come at once, as soon as I have supplied Mr. Bessington with writing materials."

Gastonia did not tell Walla that he had taken the envelope from the car just a few moments ago, and no happier man lived than he was at that moment when he thought of the time when she would be his, all his for all time. For he intended that they should be married at twelve, just as the guests were about to depart.

He sent James Horton to engage the minister to come over at the close of the evening.

Gertrude's scheme had worked well, for she had watched Walla and Sergeant Perry go out on the porch, and had purposedly led Gastonia hurriedly by them only to bring him back upon them, as though it were by accident.

Thus Gastonia, blinded by the wiles of a jealous woman, sat heart-sore and spirit wounded to write Walla about her conduct with Sergeant Perry.

CHAPTER SEVEN.

Long before the last guest departed, Gastonia took a hurried leave of Walla, leaving in her hand a letter which would explain his strange actions.

Even before Walla had sought her room and read the contents of his letter, intuitively she knew that Gertrude had evidently attempted to poison Gastonia's mind even as she had attempted to do hers.

It was ten-thirty when Gastonia left Walla's porch. He walked hurriedly over to the minister's house to tell him that his services would not be needed; at least that night.

It was now one o'clock, and the last guest had gone; everybody had closed themselves within their rooms; the house was dark and quiet, save the light that was burning in Walla's bedroom.

She sat before her dressing-table with her hair untouched. She had made no effort to undress. Her thoughts were confusing; her mind was clouded, and her plans were not quite clear.

Suddenly she aroused herself, broke the seal of Gastonia's letter, and read. Her suspicions were true. Gertrude had taken advantage of Sergeant Perry's presence and of the little time she had spent with him on the porch, and had used that as the means of poisoning his mind.

What should she do under the circumstances? Her plans made it easier for her to decide. She would write Gastonia a hurried, but encouraging, letter, without mentioning the things which seemed to annoy him most, but instead she would urge him on, telling him to press ever on to the goal of a Black American.

She would assure him that when he reached the distant fields of France that her spirit would be ever with him, to help cheer and comfort him in his hours of trial and danger, even on the battlefield.

It is needless to say that when Gastonia received the message from Walla that his thoughts were changed and his spirit revived. He was about to feel that he could make the journey a different man, but as he read on, it was with a much perplexed and clouded mind. To save his life he could not understand Walla.

As he dressed himself that morning, preparing to leave for Camp, a mad, reckless revolt at fate flooded his whole being, as he remembered all his happy dreams of what that hour would have meant to him.

He thought of Walla alone in her own room at home, when she should be in his arms receiving his warm passionate kisses and telling him how she would miss him while he was away at Camp, and that marrage was heaven, but separation was the bitterest cup of woe to the happy young bride.

He dressed himself in feverish haste and left the house for the station. His baggage left thirty minutes ahead of him.

As he hurried along such were the thoughts that filled his mind: "What am I to think? What am I to believe? Walla did not accept me, and yet she has not refused me. This letter is no more than a devoted, elderly sister would write to a younger brother whom she loved devotedly and wished every possible blessing and success to attend his way."

"But what could her relation with Sergeant Perry be? Who knows?"

These thoughts were sickening in their effect upon poor Gastonia's heart. Life seemed a perplexing problem.

On reaching the station, he was surprised to see Walla, the first one, for he went down very early in order to get his baggage checked before the crowd came.

"I have been here one whole hour, Gastonia," said Walla, ignoring any effort on Gastonia's part to act indifferent or cool, as Walla was not sure that he would greet her very cordially, after last night and her strange reply to his serious letter.

She came forward to greet him, her face wreathed in a sweet smile. "I almost wish that I was going with you, Gastonia," a pettish look in her soft brown eyes, as they sought his, made Gastonia's heart swell with delight to feel that, after all, she may care for him.

"Walla, if I really thought you cared I would be the happiest man alive!"

"You would? Well you may be happy, then, for I do care, Gastonia." She saw the effect of her words and was pleased, as she wanted to send him away happier than he seemed to have been the night before.

"Gastonia, I am geing to become a Red Cross nurse, and when you land in 'No Man's Land' I shall not be far behind you." This brought a light laugh from Gastonia, as he said: "You had better not be too hasty in your determination, Walla, for after all it may be many months before a squadron of Negro nurses sail for France."

"Never mind, Mr. Discourager, I shall remain Miss Optimist and hang upon Madam Hope's gate," said Walla, with a new light in her open brown eyes, as she smiled a satisfied smile up into his face.

As Walla mingled with the crowd that had gathered to bid a fond good-bye to Gastonia, everybody noticed how serenely Walla Davis greeted and chatted with every one and how strangely happy she seemed.

The crowd began to grow restless as the time drew near for the train to leave.

. The engine puffed and roared, sending up a sickening mass of black smoke, the last signal was given and the engine began to draw itself forward, followed by the coaches. Hands and handkerchiefs went up in saluting waves as the train pulled out of the station.

Soon Gastonia had forgotten everything but Walla and the letter she had written him the night before. Stretching himself out upon the seat, he began to read the letter. He read it over and over again. A lad, sitting in the seat behind him, gave an occa sional cough, as if to detract his attention. This happened so often that Gastonia turned to look behind him with the intention of speaking roughly to the young fellow, as he felt sure this was done to annoy him intentionally. But when he looked back he was so startled by the youthful face with its large handsome dark eyes for a moment he was dumfounded. The boy behind him bore a strange resemblance of some one he knew, but he could not think to save him.

Once again he settled himself back in his cushioned seat, but this time to read the morning paper, which he bought from the newsboy on the train.

The lad was soon fast asleep and the train moved on rapidly.

CHAPTER EIGHT.

As the crowd surged its way out of the station, some with tearful eyes, while there were others who made brave attempts to chat gayly. Some one asked where Walla was? Walla had taken a hurried leave of Gastonia, and had disappeared in the crowd about twenty minutes before the train left, was the comment of some who had seen her pass and wave a cheery good-bye.

Night came and found Dr. and Mrs. Davis anxiously awaiting Walla's return. Telephone messages all brought the same blunt reply: "No, we have not seen Walla since morning. She left the station alone."

Midnight came, but with the closing shadows came a dark terrible suspense of deepest anguish to the parents.

The neighborhood was aroused, and an alarming search was made of all the hospitals, and the police station was notified of the mysterious disappearance of Dr. and Mrs. Davis' daughter.

Morning came, but still no trace of our beautiful and gifted Walla. Was it possible that she had become reckless and thrown herself overboard, or had she been abducted?

Who knew what to think? All of Walla's friends knew how madly she loved Gastonia. He alone doubted her love for himself. Still hardly one would believe that a girl with Walla's strength of character would become so foolishly weak as to destroy herself.

But as the weeks passed without the slightest clue as to her whereabouts, everybody began to feel that the mystery was too deep a one for them to handle.

Some one who saw Walla at the station said that she acted strangely the day Gastonia left for Camp. So many still thought that Walla had either been abducted, or that she had gone to France as a Red Cross nurse, as she had so often said she wanted to become one.

Rewards had been offered by the citizens of Augusta, both Colored and White. Several weeks passed; things had begun to assume a normal spirit. But Mrs. Davis remained the same expectant, anxious mother. Every day since Walla's disappearance,

Mrs. Davis would sit on the front porch morning and evening at the time when the postman was due to pass her home. One day she sat as usual knitting on a sweater for some Negro boy in France. Somehow this day her mind wandered to Gastonia; she thought of how he would feel to have a sweater made by Walla's mother. She paused for a moment to think how she could mark the sweater so that in case he should get it that he would know it was made by her. A moment more and she had decided. The letter "W" was embroidered in the inside of the neck with red, white and blue. "There, now, he will think that Walla did this, and if she is over there where he is, then he will know that her mother did it for him, for after all I have a great deal of interest in Gastonia. I wish after all that he and Walla had married before he left and maybe he would have been able to change her mind about that wild notion of going to France, as I could not."

Since Walla's disappearance, Mrs. Davis had devoted her time to war work. She knitted sweaters for the boys in France and raised vegetables in her little war garden and took them every day up to Camp Hancock for the many Negro Sammies who were being cared for up there.

The postman's whistle blew; Mrs. Davis looked up from her knitting, waited patiently for him to come to her gate. As he approached he wore a half sad expression, for he had grown accustomed to disappointing the mother, who had always waited so patiently for a letter from her daughter, who seemed lost from her forever. And always when he approached her gate his countenance became sad, for he truly sympathized with the ever-hopeful mother. He handed her the weekly paper, "The Georgia Baptist." She took the paper and stood looking longingly at the postman as he disappeared around the corner, and started in the house, when she heard hurried footsteps approaching on the sidewalk. The footsteps arrested her attention, and she turned to see who was approaching in such a hurry, when her eyes caught sight of Catherine Wilton, one of Walla's best friends, running towards her. She knew at once that she had news from Walla, for she saw the open letter in her hand and knew that it was from Walla. Letting her work fall to the floor, Mrs. Davis retraced her steps and met Catherine on the steps; throwing her arms about her she sobbed out: "I know that you have news from Walla; pray tell me is she well?"

Catherine was moved to tears at the sound of the sad broken voice of that once happy mother.

"Yes, it is from Walla, and she is well, but her whereabouts are still a mystery, for although her letter bears several postmarks, they are all so deeply blurred that recognition is impossible. This letter she asked me to give to you and the doctor, with the hope of relieving your anxiety I came at once to you with it."

Mrs. Davis' letter bore no news of Walla's whereabouts. She told her parents that she was well and that there was no need for them to worry about her, as she was well cared for and was rendering a noble service to her Race and her Country. She told them not to write her, as she would keep them posted as to her welfare, and that she would pray that God might watch tenderly over them until He sent her back to them all safe and well again. And when she returned to them she would return a daughter to be proud of.

Mrs. Davis was sure that Walla was either in France or that she was on her way to care for the wounded and suffering men of her race.

Was there ever such a girl as Walla? with her ideas and notions of true service. That night, when the mother of our beautiful, unselfish Walla knelt at her bedside, she was a different woman, made so by her daughter's persistent determination to serve humanity.

"Oh, God, Father of the humble and Father of the proud, make me worthy of the daughter you have given me. Her prayers have ever been that she might serve You, by serving humanity; in my ignorance and selfishness, because I loved her as no mother ever loved her daughter, I tried to keep her from doing the work which her heart yearned to do. I wanted her to know only happiness. I did not realize then, as I do now, that the only true happiness known to mankind lies in serving humanity. My Heavenly Father, I thank You for her, by her simple trust and faith in Your everlasting love and protection, she has taught me what true faith and real love can do in healing a broken and wounded spirit."

When the prayer was ended, Mrs. Davis retired to rest peacefully, feeling that God's great protecting love was sufficient to take care of her daughter, and bring her safely back to her if it was His all-wise will.

CHAPTER NINE.

Jim Green was never satisfied after Gastonia left Morehouse College, for he was very fond of him, and felt that to be able to stay near him that he might acquire some of his noble traits.

So the first of April found Jim on his way to Camp Upton with Gastonia. The number of young men in the Camp at that time happened to be among the best of our boys from various schools and colleges. Among them was a lad of a boy from New York. Jim took a peculiar interest in him, and it often happened that they were thrown together on hikes and Jim had to support him back to his tent, as he seemed weary after a long hike.

The examinations were very rigid, and it was only by the shrewdness of the two young Negroes, who plotted their game to outwit their examiners. For they both felt sure that Sam Harris, the lad from New York, would never stand the test that must qualify him as a soldier for Uncle Sam.

But Sam was so anxious to serve that it was really pathetic when he confided his secret to Jim and Jim vowed to aid him all he could. And he did.

It so happened that each time Jim was examined that Sam came the next day. There was a great big secret between Sam Harris and Jim Green, and they outwitted the officers often by the meagerest chance.

Soon young Harris grew more accustomed to the hardships of army life. He soon became the favorite in the Camp among the boys. His manners were so fascinating that he often had gathered about him more than one company of both White and Negro Sammies, listening to his most wonderful tales of love, war and peace. For Sam was a born writer, and it seemed an easy matter for him to amuse the boys with the most impossible tale of romance, pathos and tragedy.

So it was no small wonder that he became so sought after and admired by all the boys in the Camp.

Most of the men of Gastonia's Company were sent to France, but he and Sam, together with about ten others, were kept at Camp Upton. This proved a most disgusting disappointment to Lieuten-

ant Bessington. Sam saw how it affected him, and his manner towards him was always so full of sympathy, that he won a warm place in Gastonia's heart and they became very good friends.

The papers were filled with news of German victories, both on land and sea. Things seemed dark for the Allies. America had just entered the war, which must mean so much to the world, and especially to the Negro. Gastonia was desperately anxious to get over in France and do his bit.

Jim Green had been sent over two weeks ago and many others, but it seemed so cruel that Gastonia could not have gone with the crowd.

One day Gastonia sat studying his map, as he so often did. Sam came up behind him and gave a laugh that startled Gastonia so that he turned and was about to call a certain name, when he looked to see Sam standing behind him smiling mischievously.

"Why, what touched you old pal?" said Sam, eyeing him closely.

"Oh, nothing; only you are terribly like some one I know. At times I could almost declare that you were the same person."

"And you cannot think who it is?"

"No, no, to save me, I cannot."

"Well, I will tell you who." Gastonia turned and looked him full in the face, for at that moment he felt sure that he knew himself who it was.

"Do you remember the day you left Augusta? Well, I was that little tantalizing boy who would not let you read your girl's letter in any peace, because I didn't have a girl nor a letter." The two laughed, and were soon lost in the study of the map of France.

CHAPTER TEN.

Days melted themselves into weeks and weeks into months. Gastonia and Sam were sailing for France. Gastonia was disappointed in Sam, for although he had successfully passed all examinations that qualified him for Sergeant, he insisted that he be permitted to serve as mess-boy until he had landed in France. So they took their passage on the same ship, but filling different positions.

We will know Gastonia no more as Gastonia, but as Lieutenant Bessington. He received his commission two days before he sailed.

Out into the blackness across a calm sea, the Captain of the vessel saw, or thought he saw, the periscope of a U-boat. All persons on board were warned of the impending danger.

But before the danger signal had been heard and understood by all on board, the vessel was struck by a shell from the undersea craft. The blackness of the night rendered every one on board almost helpless. It was a little past midnight, and the crew, with the swiftness of well-trained men, hurriedly adjusted the life-preservers and soon had the life-boats into the water.

Lieutenant Bessington and Sam were in the mess room, when suddenly they heard the unusual noise, for somehow they had not heard the danger signal.

Another shell crashed into the side of the vessel, and soon water began to pour into the ship. They could see that the now sinking vessel was returning shells with the U-boat.

Everything was in a state of confusion; women were crying and brave men were rescuing those who were too frightened to help themselves. Lieutenant Bessington and Sam rushed from the mess-room, but Lieutenant Bessington stood still for a moment, stroking his chin and looking down upon Sam. Sam stared at him for a moment, then he said: "What are you going to do, Lieutenant?"

"Come with me; we have much to do, not only for ourselves, but for our race." They went hurriedly on deck to mingle with the frightened passengers and the busy crew. Just then Lieutenant Bessington saw the Captain start towards them and fall; he knew that he had been wounded, and hurried towards him, with Sam following close behind him.

They reached the Captain's side in a few seconds, to find that he had been struck by a piece of lumber which had fallen upon his head, and the fall had broken his right arm, which lay beneath the portion of the wreckage of the sinking ship.

It was plainly seen that Sam was proud of the distinction accorded a mess-boy, and the opportunity to serve the Captain of the vessel filled his heart with pride unspeakable.

As he assisted Lieutenant Bessington in removing the still form of the vessel's Captain to a life-boat, Lieutenant Bessington saw the pride beaming from the dark eyes of the lad.

After the Captain had been placed into a life-boat, Lieutenant Bessington took Sam by the arm and led him hurriedly back on the sinking ship, where men and women were giving up in fright, with no attempt to rescue themselves.

Together they struggled, rescuing men and women alike. The last person to be saved was a woman who had hid herself in order that she might be saved, was her wild notion, as she had gone crazy from fright. She fought Gastonia and Sam so terribly that they were forced to drag her from the sinking vessel in order to save her. By this time the ship was so full of water that it was impossible to leave the vessel, so Lieutenant Bessington took the woman in his arms and dashed himself into the water with his burden, struggling and fighting frantically with both hands and feet.

This required super-human strength, and Lieutenant Bessington was well overtaxed, but as he was about to go under with his burden he suddenly remembered a stunt he learned in Camp while in bathing with a pair of dum-bells, and soon he had the woman into a life-boat and he was fighting his way back to the almost destroyed vessel, where Sam was left alone in his effort to be sure that no other passengers were left on board.

The ship by this time had caught fire and Sam's rescue seemed quite impossible. Gastonia was troubled and lifted up his voice out there in the dark chilly waters in a fervent prayer to God to save the lad who had so manfully risked his life with his own to rescue others.

Suddenly he heard Sam's voice crying for help, for he could not see Sam, but Sam could see him fighting his way in the blackness. On looking up, Lieutenant Bessington saw Sam by the light from the burning ship.

Can you swim?" yelled out Lieutenant Bessington in death-like tones from the dark waters below.

"Yes, yes, I hope so, at least," said Sam, with a certain fear looming up into his heart. Danger and the darkest peril seemed to be awaiting him as he caught the pole which had begun to fall from the burning ship.

Lieutenant Bessington began to see the graveness of the situation, as Sam reeled and began to struggle, and almost tumble under the terrible struggle for his life. But he beat all fear from his heart as he saw the slight form of Sam as it came fighting its way through the air and fell with a splash into the water beside him.

After a great effort, Lieutenant Bessington caught Sam in his arms and began to swim for dear life about in the dark waters. Sam for a few minutes was limp and lay helpless in Lieutenant Bessington's arms while he fought furiously with the waves. Soon the chilly waters revived Sam, for he had fainted as any woman would have done under the strain.

But soon he realized what weakness he had displayed and tore himself from the arms of Lieutenant Bessington and began to swim with all his might by the side of Lieutenant Bessington.

They were both good swimmers; they reached the side of the last life-boat which could only take in one more person. Without waiting to discuss who should take the only vacant seat, Lieutenant Bessington lifted Sam into the boat and turned himself about in the waters and again began to swim swiftly as possible.

After several hours of hard fighting with the waves and the life-boats day began to break. Lieutenant Bessington had picked up the Captain's telescope as he removed the wounded Captain from the ship, and by some super-human effort he had been able to hold to it by fastening it to his shoulder. With it raised to his eyes he could see that some of the life-boats were fast losing their course, and he could see many survivors struggling in the chilly waters.

Looking eastward in the distance he spied a flickèr of light. Looking steadily ahead through the telescope he was more than convinced that it was an approaching vessel. He was sure that the vessel was an American vessel, and evidently the same fate awaited it as had befallen them.

Lieutenant Bessington saw another chance to distinguish himself. He turned to the left and saw by the dawning light of the

early morning, Sam's small body moving in the waters, bringing himself nearer and nearer towards him.

Lieutenant Bessington was a good swimmer and fairly went in leaps and bounds towards the approaching ship. He seemed to have had no fear of the dangers of the sea, but went for dear life in the direction of the approaching vessel.

Going with all his strength he found himself unable to coast around a long pole which was evidently from the sunken vessel.

So he made a dive, striking his head; he felt himself go under, his arms became limp, and he no longer felt his senses in motion.

On and on the steamer plunged its way. The Captain on board looking through his telescope saw Lieutenant Bessington as he plunged under the pole, but lost sight of him.

Greater speed was put on, and soon the ship was nearing the place where the Captain saw a man go down.

Just then Lieutenant Bessington's head emerged from the water. This time he threw up one arm. In five minutes he was being lifted to the side of the steamer and was carried on deck.

There was no sign that they felt or thought of Lieutenant Bessington as being a Negro. It was the fact that a man had been rescued from a watery grave.

Artificial respiration given, the work of reviving him continued until at last he breathed. Those about him saw or thought they saw an effort on his part to speak, so they raised him up and soon he was in a sitting position, telling those about him of the fate of his ship and of their danger.

While Lieutenant Bessington was still speaking two men came in bearing the limp form of Sam Harris. At first he did not know that it was Sam. Before he had finished the account of the destruction of his ship, a shot was fired from the undersea craft. But the shot went wild.

The ship was put in motion and a smoke-screen started. This warded off each blow from the treacherous German boat of the deep.

There was an hour's hard fighting as the steamer persistently attempted to make its way to the suffering survivors of the torpedoed vessel.

During the struggle between the U-boat and the American Liner,

several shots were fired. Soon no response came from the U-boat and the captain and crew on board the liner were positive that the undersea craft had been disabled.

Again the liner took up its journey unhampered, and in the distance they saw in full view the wreckage of the enemy's boat emerge and sink again into the ocean.

Still farther into the distance the captain of the liner could see the survivors of the sunken vessel in lifeboats and some still fighting their way about in the water.

At last the liner reached the suffering mass of human beings who had been the victims of Germany's cruel sea-fighting.

The survivors were taken on board the liner, and many did not wait to be taken on, but climbed up unnoticed or assisted by the busy crew who were rescuing the ones from the life-boats and from the waters as fast as they could.

Somehow Lieutenant Bessington felt that if the U-boat had been destroyed, that it would be possible that if the crew of the ill-fated German boat did not come and ask for mercy at the hands of those whom they had tried to destroy, that they may attempt to steal their way on board. And again he felt that it would give him a chance to prove his ability as a Black American soldier.

Several men and women died from exposure and injuries, and were buried at sea. But no one could account for the victims of the destroyed U-boat. But Lieutenant Bessington felt sure that before they landed in France that they would be giving a Negro credit for the arrest of the German survivors of the U-boat.

Lieutenant Bessington's first thought was that, with a German's shrewdness, they would no doubt murder some passengers on board and disguise themselves in their clothes and use their credentials as proof of their identity. For on taking advantage of the confusion on board at the time of the rescue, it would have been easy for them to get aboard and pose as Americans after disguising themselves in the murdered Americans' clothes.

Lieutenant Bessington pondered over these perplexing possibilities until they almost seemed a certainty. And much of his suspicions proved true.

CHAPTER ELEVEN.

One would think that peace and plenty once more reigned among the happy Americans on board the liner. Three more days to be spent on the watery deep and the survivors, crew and passengers, would land somewhere on French soil.

The night was balmy and the sea was untroubled, but a soft wind had begun to twist itself upon the waters in the West.

Lieutenant Bessington and Sam were in their cabin and for once he had given himself up to sleep. Sam sat at the table writing. Sam and Lieutenant Bessington had become fast friends now that they were to share the honors of true Black Americans.

Lieutenant Bessington aroused himself and found Sam looking intently down upon him with a curious expression in his dark brown eyes.

"Why, Sam, one would think that I was about to cross the River of Jordan, judging from your expression and the way you sit there gazing at me. What did I look like sleeping, any way? I suppose I did look kinder lonesome, didn't I?"

"No, indeed, Lieutenant—er, please may I say Gastonia, as of old?"

"Why, I have been thinking of the same thing, Sam. Somehow I have never felt like Lieutenant Bessington to you, and greatly prefer that you call me Gastonia, as of old."

"Thank you, for you have made me very happy."

Gastonia raised himself up on one side of the bunk upon which he had been sleeping, and looked full into Sam's face, as he said:

"Sam, at times you positively startle me by your expressions and manner. What is it any way that is so impressive about you?"

"I am sure I do not know, Gastonia, do you? Ha, ha, ha." With this, Sam resumed his writing.

Gastonia got up from his bunk and seemed impelled to read what was on the paper on which Sam was writing. His eyes dilated as he caught sight of the first line on the paper. It was the same poem as the one Walla had handed him at the station the day she left him in haste and so mysteriously.

"Say, Sam, where did you get that poem you are writing?"

"Why, er—I got it from out of my head, I reckon, or, at least, I suppose," said Sam, half stammernig and a half pettish voice, much unlike that of a boy of his age.

Gastonia took the poem from Sam and read it aloud, but as though he was reading it to himself:

"Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank my God who created me
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance,
I have not winced nor cried aloud,
Under the bludgeonings of chance,
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears,
Looms but the horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how straight the gate—
How charged with punishment the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,—
And Christ the Captain of my soul."

As Gastonia finished reading the last lines, he gave vent to a sigh. Sam looked up with a mischievous twinkle in his soft brown eyes, and said:

"Why, positively, Gastonia, one would think that you were in love. What is it about the things I do that always seems to put you to thinking, and about whom do you think when I talk, write, or sing, old pal?"

At that moment a knock interrupted the two who seemed so perplexed concerning each other.

Sam jumped up and bounded towards the door to open it, but Gastonia checked him, and said:

"I will answer that, and whenever any one comes at this hour, if I am asleep call me. I have reasons for this, that's all. Again

the knock sounded, more distinct this time. Gastonia went over to the door and opened it gently.

It was one of the Red Cross nurses from room 32. Gastonia was somewhat surprised, but he appeared self-possessed and said coldly, but with a soft smile encircling his broad mouth:

"Come in, will you?"

"Well, I suppose so, if you are not too tired and do not want to retire early?"

"Oh, no, why just come right in, for we were sorter lonely, any way, and we are real glad to have a visitor," said Gastonia, as he winked knowingly at Sam.

"You look somewhat weary yourself, Miss Bowers," said Gastonia, eyeing her closely.

"Well, to tell you the truth, I am really weary." The voice was somewhat coarse for a woman, and Sam felt sure that it was an assumed one. But for what purpose he could not fathom, but Gastonia seemed well pleased for some reason and kept Miss Clara Bowers, the friendly Red Cross nurse, talking earnestly until very late into the night.

Sam retired and left them talking over some serious matter, and when he awoke the next morning the first thing he said was:

"How long did you and that Miss Bowers talk last night? I thought that you would never get through. Lookout, Gastonia, that isn't going to prove the best thing for you, to have those nurses coming to your room at night."

"Dont 'worry, old pal, your big brother will never go amiss with a white woman while his own face is black."

"How much better I feel you will never know, Gastonia, for you are too noble to allow anything to mar your chances for your triumphant career as the Black American."

Again, Gastonia turned a perplexed gaze on Sam. But this time Sam went hurriedly from the room, laughing heartily.

"Well, of all the folks I ever saw, Sam Harris is the most puzzling bit of humanity alive. At times he is almost feminine in his kind and gentle manner. And yet he is as bold and ambitious a lad as I ever saw. But I must confess that I am often amazed at his sayings and the way he has of teasing me. Oh, well, I suppose I am interested in him because whenever he smiles that he reminds me of Walla; but why should I bother about thoughts of

Walla? For hasn't she treated me with the greatest unkindness and indifference? She has written but twice since I left Augusta; isn't that proof sufficient for me to know that evidently she has promised to marry Perry, and means that I shall take her actions for proof of her lack of interest in me?"

Sam came in swiftly and put an end to Gastonia's reverie. "Well, are you still reading my poem?" spoke Sam, teasingly, for Gastonia held the poem in his hand, as he was thinking of the day when Walla gave it to him. But he had not read it, but simply looked at it and wished with all his soul that he could see Walla and ask her once more what she intended to do about their future.

The day passed away quietly. Gastonia spent much time with the Red Cross nurses, and was always in high spirits when he left them, but resumed a more thoughtful and serious attitude when alone. Sam could not understand this, so he was determined to ask Gastonia that night what it was that seemed to impel him to seek those Red Cross nurses.

Night came and Sam told Gastonia that he wanted to have a talk with him. Gastonia suggested that they go up on deck.

It was about eleven-thirty when they went out on deck, and no place served more fittingly the purpose of their isolation, as did the deck at that hour.

Sam noticed that Gastonia led him directly in front of room 32, in which the four Red Cross nurses were.

Suddenly, Gastonia seemed to have been seized with a certain instinct to watch room 32, as the door stood ajar. So he and Sam sat in steamer chairs where they could watch in that direction.

Sam had a pout on his lips that told Gastonia that he was not pleased with the idea. But Gastonia ignored that and motioned to him to pretend that he was asleep until the occupants of the room appeared. Sam was comprehensive, and caught Gastonia's meaning at once. and soon he was apparently asleep, even though he did not know Gastonia's reason for wishing him to play spy on the nurses.

Sam began to see something plausible in Lieutenant Bessington's action. For why should a door to a lady's stateroom be open at that hour of the night? After all, Sam felt that Lieutenant Bessington was acting upon some instinct, produced by his unquestionable good judgment.

Soon the two Negroes were apparently fast asleep. They drew themselves still farther into the shadow where they could not be observed, while they watched the door of room 32, which remained open.

Suddenly a man with a cap pulled well down over his face emerged from the stateroom. As the figure of the man moved slowly away, Lieutenant Bessington and Sam followed stealthily behind him unobserved.

They followed on until they saw where he meant to go; they kept always in the shadow until the figure had gained the stairs leading to the lower deck. They descended noiselessly behind him, always taking care to keep in the shadow.

Once the figure paused, looked about him, and Sam was just in time to catch a glimpse of his face from where he stood watching him, and he recognized it as the face of the Red Cross nurse who had visited their room the night before.

Lieutenant Bessington was determined to lose no chance in tracking this mysterious person to his hole, for he was sure now, from knowledge gained by his eagerness to gain information from him concerning the order of American troops going to France.

Lieutenant Bessington had encouraged the mysterious Red Cross nurse by pretending to be disgusted because he had been forced to fight for America, when he, as a Negro, had no rights. He had suspected the four nurses as being the survivors from the U-boat, and was determined to find out by any means, even if he had to go against his own country to gain the desired information.

So Lieutenant Bessington was always complaining, in order to draw him out, and he did. For he did not tell him that he had volunteered as a Black American to fight for his country and his race. But he led the supposed American Red Cross nurse to believe that he had been among the first drafted Negroes who were forced to fight for a country which had denied him the right of a free man to live and protect his family against the assaults of other races.

This pleased the supposed Red Cross nurse, and she had given Lieutenant Bessington some very valuable information. And it was by that information that he felt that he would be able to arrest the four Red Cross nurses as spies and bring the trophies home for the American Negroes by his shrewdness.

CHAPTER TWELVE.

Lieutenant Bessington sent Sam to his cabin to snatch a few moments' rest, for he was showing signs of fatigue. After some hours of waiting he saw the same figure return and ascend the stairs. He crept up noiselessly behind him and saw him enter stateroom 32.

Lieutenant Bessington drew forward a steamer chair and wrapped a blanket about himself in such a way that he could see, but his entire head was so apparently enveloped in the blanket that no one could tell that there was the penetrating gaze of a person under its folds. He sat there without hardly batting his eyes, for fear a move would be made without his knowledge.

While he sat there keeping vigilance on room 32, a great tenderness came over him as he thought of Sam and how loyal and devoted he had ever been to him ever since they became friends in Camp and how anxious he had always been concerning him when he thought of the probable harm that might have come to him through the visits at night from that Red Cross nurse. All of this gave Lieutenant Bessington a new interest in Sam, and he was determined to use every bit of influence to get him to ask for his commission at once.

Five o'clock came, and still Lieutenant Bessington sat at his post; seven o'clock, and still he remained waiting the results of his vigilance. The breakfast gong sounded, and still Lieutenant Bessington kept vigil at his post.

Passengers were moving to and fro about the ship now. Sam came and tried to induce Lieutenant Bessington to join him at breakfast, but he waved him away impatiently. Sam knew that evidently something of grave importance about the Red Cross nurse was holding him on deck, so he left him to his charge.

Suddenly room door 32 was thrown open and the four Red Cross nurses came out and made their way to the dining-room. Lieutenant Bessington threw off the blanket and hastened forward behind them. In his haste he brushed the arm of one as if by accident; looking back, to beg pardon, his eyes fell full into the eyes of his mysterious white friend, the Red Cross nurse, and the mysterious figure of last midnight.

After following them to the entrance of the dining-room, he paused long enough to ascertain that they were seated at the table which the four Red Cross nurses had occupied. Then he turned and went hastily to his cabin.

As he opened the door the first thing that caught his gaze was a white sheet of paper which fluttered from the table. It was a poem which Sam had evidently just written. He picked it up and read it feverishly, as he was anxious to get back to the dining-room. He read the following:

"I know not what will befall me!
God hangs a mist over my eyes,
And over each step of my onward path,
He makes new scenes to rise,
And every joy He sends me comes
As a glad and sweet surprise.

"I see not a step before me,
As I tread the days of the year;
But the past is still in God's keeping,
The future His mercy shall clear;
And what looks dark in the distance,
May brighten as I draw near.

"For perhaps the dreaded future,
Has less bitterness than I think;
The Lord may sweeten the water
Before I stoop to drink;
Or if Marah must be Marah
He will stand beside the brink.

"It may be there is waiting
For the coming of my feet,
Some gift of such rare sweetness,
Some joy so strangely sweet,
That my lips can only tremble
With the thanks I can not speak.

"O, restful, blessful ignorance!

'Tis blessed not to know;
It keeps me quiet in those arms
Which will not let me go,
And hushes my soul to rest upon
The bosom which loves me so.

"So I go on, not knowing;
I would not if I might;
I would rather walk in the dark with God
Than go alone in the light;
I would rather walk with Him by faith,
Than walk alone by sight.

"My heart shrinks back from
Which the future may disclose,
Yet I never had a sorrow
But what the dear Lord chose;
So I send the coming tears back,
With the whispered word, 'He knows!' "

With the poem still in his hand, Lieutenant Bessington stood as one stupefied. He was more perplexed than ever, but he had no time to waste on sentimental things, so he hastened and bathed his face and hands, brushed his hair and in a feverish haste had made himself presentable, and in fifteen minutes was on his way to the dining-room where the four Red Cross nurses sat eating and chatting gayly.

Leaving the dining-room after breakfast, Lieutenant Bessington and Sam went at once to their cabin. Lieutenant Bessington closed the door cautiously and turned to Sam and said:

"Sam, I want you to help me ask God to give me courage to handle the situation I have on hand. Sit down and listen to me for one minute," said Lieutenant Bessington, thoughtfully.

"Well, Sam old boy, I am positive that we have rounded up four German spies in the form of these Red Cross nurses. Evidently they sought refuge on this ship during the time of the rescue of the survivors from our vessel. I felt that such would be the case, and put forth every effort to secure evidence to support and bear out the suspicions I had. And so far I have succeeded, for

those four Red Cross nurses are none other than four German spies from the U-boat which destroyed our vessel and attempted to destroy this ship and was destroyed instead, and during the panic they entered with the rest of the survivors. They evidently threw overboard four of the American Red Cross nurses and took their uniforms and other things.

Lieutenant Bessington was correct in his suspicions, for those four Red Cross nurses were the four Germans who, when they saw that their boat was disabled, took advantage of the panic and entered the ship from the west by swimming to the vessel's side and crawling up from the rear, as all attention was being given to the east, as that was the direction of the U-boat which was engaging the liner in a stiff battle.

The men with the shrewdness of Germans hid themselves in stateroom 32 and when the four American Red Cross nurses returned to their cabin after the excitement, they seized them, gagging them and binding them securely until they found an opportune time to cast them overboard, which they did that night.

That night they kept a close watch and saw the Captain make his rounds and when he had gotten a safe distance away they lifted the still forms of the American Red Cross nurses to the railing of the vessel in the still hours of the early morning, and let their lifeless bodies fall into the waters below. All letters and personal baggage were divided between the four and each of the four Germans assumed the name of one of the American nurses.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN.

Lieutenant Bessington sat watching Sam for a full minute, with his gaze fixed on his upturned face, without realizing that he was looking at him at all. At that moment he had been almost startled at the striking resemblance of Sam's face to a face he had seen or known somewhere.

"Why do you stare at me so, Lieutenant?" spoke Sam, visibly affected by his scrutiny.

"Well, to tell you the truth, Sam, I hardly know myself, only you suddenly reminded me of a face I have either seen or known before."

"I suppose you must be thinking again of our trip to Iowa last March," said Sam, as he cast a pettish glance into Lieutenant Bessington's eyes.

Lieutenant Bessington sat still for a moment stroking his mustache thoughtfully, as he said even more thoughtfully:

"I suppose I was unconsciously."

"Yes, you are often unconsciously thinking of things, I fear Lieutenant," said Sam, playfully, crossing his legs and twisting his mustache with both hands.

"Sam, I know that your bravery is going to merit you something, and I wish that you could be placed in my Division. It is the 92d Division, but better known as the 'All-American Division.' They left me in the hospital for several weeks, and you see I am just following them.

"If it is possible I am going to try to keep you with me. I am sure that after we have captured those German spies that our desires will at least be considered."

"Well, if you are sure that the mysterious man and the other three Red Cross nurses are spies, we should go at once to the Captain and report them," said Sam, in an impulsive, nervous, hoarse whisper.

"We must do nothing of the kind, Sam; have you quite lost your reason?" said Lieutenant Bessington, as he rose from his chair with a gesture of vexation and a troubled expression about his forehead.

"Do you mean to spoil everything by your impulsive ideas of loyalty? Remember that our race stands back of us, and whatever we do, now or on the battlefield, must reflect credit upon our race and its women as the mothers of a race that has been abused, misunderstood and disfranchised for many years.

"It is now up to the Negro of the Twentieth Century to place himself in a position where he can demand justice and freedom for his people by the 'Democracy declared by America,'" spoke Lieutenant Bessington vehemently.

Sam tried hard to conceal the impression Lieutenant Bessington's words had upon him, but the burning glances that came forth from his eyes told that a fountain of tears were just within the chambers of those dark brown eyes, and that his words had gone home to his heart.

The Lieutenant felt sure that Sam had made a silent pledge to look more seriously upon life and do his part in the winning of "Democracy" for the Negro. Somehow he felt that much of Sam's impulsiveness and indifference was assumed; still for what reason he was at a loss to fathom.

Evidently, he had some secret reason for assuming strange attitudes. But the Lieutenant was convinced of one thing, that even though Sam was young, that he was a lad of will-power and ability. Somehow there seemed to be something so fascinating about him that he drew the warmth and tenderness from his heart, and Lieutenant Bessington often found himself enjoying a trifling joke with Sam with the greatest interest and satisfaction.

Turning to Sam with a softer light in his dark, kind eyes, he said in a tone such as an elder brother would speak to an impulsive younger brother:

"Sam, will you accept me as your mentor? I promise to be more patient with you, as I am sure that your indifference and impulsiveness have a cure, and I mean to find it.

Sam rose also and stood facing the Lieutenant with a pettish smile playing around his well-shaped mouth.

"No one could resist such an invitation," he answered, and put his arms around the Lieutenant's neck and kissed him gently on his neck.

"We have a plenty to discover, and I shall not let the God of pride make me its foolish worshipper. For then I might lose the

most valued advice. But instead of being my mentor I am going to insist that you be my Black American, and I shall follow in your wake."

The horror of mystery was in the gaze which flashed from Lieutenant Bessington's eyes into the expressionless eyes of Sam. Sam laughed outright, as he again seated himself, crossing his legs and twisting his mustache, then allowing a mischievous smile to play about his mouth.

Sam had found out that his apparent light-headedness caused the Lieutenant much concern, so he resorted to freakishness to relieve much of the embarrassment which was produced by such serious thoughts between them.

Sam rose and with methodical tidiness began to straighten up their cabin so that it would look presentable in case the mysterious nurse should visit them.

Unknown, undreamed-of emtoion came over Lieutenant Bessington as he watched Sam moving about the room. Soon he forgot everything and everybody but Walla, for during her long silence his thoughts had followed her, sometimes in wonderment. For he loved her, but her strange attitude always left him perplexed.

"Say, Lieutenant! would you be very disappointed in me if I should turn out to be less of a hero than you anticipated?" Sam said this with one of his teasing smiles into the Lieutenant's face. Looking over the Lieutenant's shoulder from where he stood, Sam caught sight of a letter which was foreign, for one full glance told him it was. For a moment Sam was so moved that he dare not speak, as he would again display his weakness.

Sam's voice again startled Lieutenant Bessington, as it was almost feminine, and at that time reminded him vividly of Walla, but he was determined to hide the confusion it caused him in mind. So with his wonderful iron self-control, the inheritance of those who are called upon to suffer silently, he answered in an ordinary voice:

"Sam, it is not possible, I am sure, that I shall ever have reason to become disappoitned in you."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN.

Lieutenant Bessington had kept a vigilant watch on stateroom 32 for three days, growing wiser with each experience. He knew for a fact now that he had the four supposed Red Cross nurses cornered as spies.

The night was clear and balmy, the upper deck was crowded with eager faces. Nearing the shores of France, the passengers became restless and the Red Cross workers were asked to furnish a program on the upper deck. The four nurses from room 32 were present and took an active part, showing themselves very affable.

The Lieutenant saw his chance and seized it with a feverish determination to win as a Black American the trophy for his race. He went in search of the Captain, leaving Sam to keep watch on the four mysterious American nurses.

Although they were extremely pleasant and made themselves agreeable to everyone, still many noticed that they always took pains to keep themselves apart from the rest of the workers by pretending to be intensely interested in each other's knitting.

In thirty minutes stateroom 32 had undergone a thorough search. Nothing appeared that would give the searchers an idea that the four Red Cross nurses who occupied the room were any other than American Red Cross nurses. Until the Lieutenant drew out his pocket knife and cut a hole in one of the pillows on the bunk at his side, producing several papers and letters, some of which bore the imperial seal. These he handed to the Captain. Those about him no longer doubted his ability to track German spies.

The Lieutenant then related to the Captain all he had seen and all he had chanced to hear during his three days of watchfulness. He left the Captain and his men while they continued their search and made his way hastily to Sam's side and told him all.

Sam was in a fever to seize the Germans by all means, as he felt sure that sufficient evidence had been given to prove them to be German spies. "But the Captain and his men must be convinced further," vehemently objected Lieutenant Bessington to Sam's plans.

The Lieutenant asked the Captain if he and Sam might be

permitted to arrest the four Germans at midnight. The Captain consented to this after some meditation.

At midnight fifty soldiers were given command and turned over to Lieutenant Bessington to maintain order and assist in the arrest of the Hun spies in case they should show a disposition to resist the arrest, which was to be made by the two Negroes who detected them as spies.

The soldiers were placed all about in every nook and secret place possible, around and about stateroom 32. At midnight the Captain came on the scene. The Lieutenant suggested that they remain there in silence a few moments. For ten minutes they stood noiselessly awaiting some effort on the part of the Huns to leave the room. Suddenly they heard whispered sounds from the door where they stood. The Captain was standing near Sam with a puzzled expression on his face, for to save him he could not interpret what they were saying. Sam saw that the Captain was evidently trying to fathom what they said, and he came a step nearer and with his ear close to the door, and was soon interpreting in subdued tones what he could catch of the broken German which was being spoken in incoherent snatches of hoarse whispers by the spies from within. This is what he heard and communicated to the Captain, and it seemed to have been the voice of the chief Hun spy speaking:

"I believe that we are being watched, boys; I feel sure that that Negro suspects me, and if he does then we are turned up as sure as frost. For you know how darn loyal those blacks are to America. But if we are trapped, remember the exit."

The Captain stood by puzzled, as the incoherent speaking was far from being distinct. And he was amazed that Sam could so fluently interpret almost every word the man said. Sam had made a special study of German and was proud to be able to be of service to the Captain.

The Captain had given his consent to allow Lieutenant Bessington to have as many soldiers as was needed to make whatever discoveries or arrests as was necessary. The officers and the Captain marveled at the coolness of Lieutenant Bessington's manner, and with what dignity of command he carried out the search and the tracking of the German spies.

Lieutenant Bessington had not taken his eyes from the door

during Sam's interpretation to the Captain. He stood with eyes riveted on the door and his revolver in hand ready for action.

Suddenly the door opened and the same mysterious figure stepped out; his cap was well over his face and he did not see the forms of the three men, as they moved aside, until Lieutenant Bessington, with revolver leveled, said:

"Hands up!" The secret emissary was abashed and stood trembling before the pointed pistol in the Lieutenant's hand. When the soldiers heard the word, "Hands up!" they became alert and were in readiness for any emergency.

Up went the spy's hands, his eyes flashed fire at the idea of being arrested by a Negro soldier. His knees trembled perceptibly. The soldiers came forward and seized him, as Lieutenant Bessington pulled a pair of handcuffs from his pocket and placed them about both of the Hun's wrists. He made a drastic effort to get free, but was overpowered by the Lieutenant and the soldiers.

Leaving him in charge of the soldiers, the Lieutenant, the Captain and Sam forced their way into the room. There, sitting in a chair at a table, sat a man in an official German uniform. Lieutenant Bessington stepped forward and exclaimed vehemently:

"Why, this is an Imperial uniform, isn't it, Captain? And this gentleman is evidently the Kaiser's son, the Crown Prince."

"I am much of your opinion, Lieutenant," spoke the Captain in a proud voice with a gaze of admiration.

Excitement was beaming from the eyes of the three Germans posing as Red Cross nurses as they sat upright looking into the faces of their captors. They were commanded by the Negro Lieutenant to keep their seats. The Captain and Sam came forward and soon the stateroom had undergone a thorough search. Nothing was found except the same things which had been discovered that evening and left there to keep them from thinking that they had been detected.

The Captain sent Sam to tell the soldiers to bring the chief Hun spy in the stateroom. Lieutenant Bessington asked to be allowed to remain alone with Sam to guard the spies till morning, when it would be decided by the higher offcers what should be done with the spies. The Captain consented and he and the soldiers took leave of Lieutenant Bessington, saluting him, and the Captain in a stern and commanding voice ordered the German spies to salute Lieutenant Bessington, and they were left alone with the Huns.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN.

On the vessel plunged its weary way, nearing the shores of France. The wounded Captain and the Captain of the liner were in close conversation with some of the military officials who were on board the liner. The two Captains had frequently expressed themselves concerning the ability of the two Augusta Negroes.

"Why they have no superiors in flesh; when you talk with the Lieutenant you have the sense of conversing with your superior. With the proper training, Sam Harris will be of great value to his country. And I would venture to say that the two, with the proper training, would prove to be two of the best secret service men which America could boast of, white or black. That Black Lieutenant is capable of leading any regiment."

Even though those remarks were compliments to two Negroes, they brought forth long and loud applause, responsive to such fitting appreciation for the bravery and heroism of the two Negroes.

Left alone with the German spies the Lieutenant decided to let Sam pretend to be asleep and he would do the same. He took every precaution to see that there was no possible way of escape left open for the shrewd Germans. Then he told Sam to be seated and pretend to sleep while he would do likewise.

With his back to the Germans he knew their every action, or slightest move. For he held in his hand before his eyes a small mirror which reflected the forms of the three spies to him.

Suddenly the man wearing the Imperial uniform, thinking the two Negroes asleep, shook his head ferociously until something fell from his head at his side. Into the thick folds of his hair he had secreted matches for perhaps such an emergency as the one he found himself face to face with.

He had been lying on his bunk where he threw himself when he had been left bound and seated on the side of it by the Lieutenant who had bound him with a heavy cord, as he did not have another pair of handcuffs. Up above him was another bunk. He bent his face forward and brought up the match from the floor with the aid of his tongue he drew the match between his teeth; he looked about him to be sure that the two Negroes were asleep; he struggled to his feet and reaching noiselessly to the wooden strip which held the

bunks in a firm support, he kept a continued motion of the head until a small blaze had been started, lowering his head so that the blaze would come in contact with the rope which was holding his hands fast. He managed with difficulty to ignite it.

Sam, from sheer weariness, had begun to feel the touch of Morpheus' hand as it stole soothingly over him. And just as he was about to give up to its influence he heard the sound of the match striking; turning he saw the spy's act and bounded forth and was about to seize him when Lieutenant Bessington put forth his hand with a silent gesture. The spy looked around himself to find that he was trapped in his game. But not before he had succeeded in burning the rope which bound his hands. Quick as a flash, he bounded forth towards the Lieutenant who sat with his back to the emissary, but was able to see everything that went on behind him by the aid of the mirror which he held in his hand.

The emissary thought that with his back to him that he would be able to overpower him; his feet being tied unbalanced him and he fell to the floor. This aroused the other emissaries who had fallen asleep upon their bunks.

Checked in his game, the Hun was not to be outdone. With his body stretched out upon the floor he reached forth his hands subtlely, and before Lieutenant Bessington had time to resist he had him by both ankles and brought him down to the floor and was wringing the revolver from his hand, when suddenly Lieutenant Bessington turned tricks on him and dealt him a blow in the face with his fist, which seemed to have paralyzed his whole body.

The pistol dropped from his hand. The Lieutenant picked it up with one hand and with the other hand he assisted the emissary to a standing position.

"Now, coward, dog that you are, to strike a man in his back and when he is not looking; stand there; make one move and it will be your last," said the Lieutenant in breathless snatches of speech.

Marching up to the others, facing them, he turned to Sam and said, "Sam bring the Captain here at once; I will stand guard alone, and the first man to move dies."

Four soldiers hearing the struggle between the Huns and the Lieutenant came rushing into the room, as they were on guard in case they were needed by the inner guards. But Lieutenant Bess-

ington waved them aside and they returned to the outside by order of the Lieutenant.

The Huns were placed in a row; Lieutenant Bessington stood facing them with his pistol leveled at their heads.

Presently footsteps were heard, and there was a move as Lieutenant Bessington turned his head to ascertain the approaching persons. Again the subtle Hun fell to the floor, with his feet still bound; he reached for Lieutenant Bessington's ankle after stretching himself forward upon the floor.

The Lieutenant took the butt end of the revolver and struck the hand, but leaning on his stomach the emissary seized the revolver and wrung it from the Lieutenant's hand, firing one shot into the Lieutenant's right arm.

Hearing the shot, the Captain and Sam ran for dear life, to find Lieutenant Bessington struggling with the Hun spy, while the other spies were making desperate attempts to free themselves.

Sam rushed at once, with his revolver in hand, to check them in their mad attempt for freedom. The Captain took in the situation at once and soon the Hun wearing the Imperial uniform was under guard.

Lieutenant Bessington's wounds were dressed, but for several hours he lay in his cabin in a weakened condition from the loss of blood. Sam was in constant attendance upon the Lieutenant.

Everybody on board seemed delighted to sooth the wounded Negro Lieutenant. But Sam was permitted to remain at the bedside of the suffering Lieutenant and seemed delighted to be near him at all times.

Sam was often so gentle and so anxious that the Lieutenant felt that he had both brother and friend in this brave boy, who, in spite of his impulsiveness, reminded him of days spent with some very dear friends at home.

"Lieutenant, to see you lying there, wounded and bandaged, reminds me vividly of some favorite verses. Shall I repeat them to you?" Sam said this, looking full into Lieutenant Bessington's eyes with a mischievous twinkle playing about his large dark eyes.

Lieutenant Bessington had suffered a great deal of pain, but was apparently much improved, and Sam, wishing to divert his mind, ventured to recite the poem:

"Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole."

Sam did not finish the verse, for as he turned to see if the Lieutenant was listening, he saw the most startled expression on the Lieutenant's face, and for fear of bad results Sam quickly changed the poem into a most ridiculous joke, which made the Lieutenant laugh heartily.

Sam finished his story of an old man and his beautiful daughter. The last words of Sam's story died away to a soft whisper. As he turned to look at the Lieutenant he was startled at the expression that met his gaze. For the sick man was resting on his well arm, looking straight into his face, and as he lifted his eyes they fell full into those of the Lieutenant's. Sam became almost feminine as he said pettishly:

"Why, I believe those little stories have served to strengthen my little invalid Lieutenant, and that you are really very much improved. Aren't you?" He moved over to the bed while he spoke and assisted the Lieutenant to lie down upon his pillow again.

"Yes, I am for the time being, Sam, but I must confess that there is something about you that puzzles me. And I am more confused than suffering just now."

"Well, if I occasion such keen apprehension, I suppose it would be best for me to keep out of the sick room until you are more improved than you are now, or until you are entirely well?"

"Oh, no, by no means would I have you stay away from me."

Just then a knock at the door put an end to the conversation. A messenger came to tell Sam that he was wanted in the wounded Captain's room.

Lieutenant Bessington was almost sorry that Sam had to leave him, but he felt sure that it was of importance, and he reluctantly let him leave his side for a few moments to be spent with the man whose life they had saved.

The Lieutenant was far from being comfortable, but he tried hard to impress Sam that he was much improved, for Sam was always so anxious for fear that he may be called upon to leave the Lieutenant.

The wound in his arm refused to respond to the best treat-

ment and was healing very slowly, but the Lieutenant was ever hopeful of being able to take up his duties soon after he arrived in France.

He lay on his bed making plans daily; in spite of the pain he seemed determined to map out his work which he intended doing while in France in spite of his wounded arm.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN.

At last the distant shore of France was in sight, looming up as a beaconing light. All the passengers caught sight of the precious French soil.

The wounded and the sick were carried at once to the Base Hospital, where they received medical attention at once. The prisoners were taken in charge by guards who met the vessel, and taken at once to the French-American prison quarters.

It was evident from the expressions on the faces of the prisoners that they were surprised at the kind treatment and attention accorded them as prisoners.

Lieutenant Bessington was carried to the Base Hospital with the wounded Captain.

Battles were raging at all points. The Germans had begun to retreat at almost every point.

Lieutenant Bessington's Company was in the thick of the fray. The news was brought to him by an officer who visited the wounded American Captain.

"The famous Negro regiment fought like veterans and with a fierceness equal to any white regiment. This is the first time any of the Negro regiments have been under aimed shell and machine gun fire, and they stood it like moss-covered old-timers. They never flinched or showed any sign of fear. All that was necessary was to tell them to go, and they went. Lots were killed and wounded, but their names will go down in history as brave soldiers who died for America's "Democracy for the world." The officer said this as he cast a glance at the Lieutenant, who was reclining on his cot with his face expressionless watching him. The wounded Captain was much improved and was visiting Lieutenant Bessington when he received the call from the white American officer.

After several days Lieutenant Bessington was removed to one of the Field Hospitals, where he would receive attention near the lines and where he would be better able to see the American General at an earlier date. The Captains of the two vessels on which Lieutenant Bessington had distinguished himself put forth every effort to have him placed where the American General could visit him as soon as possible.

Lieutenant Bessington was ill and weak from the loss of blood, but summing up all the strength he could he began to draw up his plans for a request he intended to make of the General when he visited him, as he had been told by the Captains that he would receive some distinction for his barvery at sea.

A few days passed and Lieutenant Bessington was told that the General would probably visit him that day.

Standing by the cot of an American soldier who had been wounded, were two officers discussing the battles which were raging in Le Cateau. One was telling the other officer: That the American troops were operating with the British on the front southeast of Cambrai, and were just about to complete the capture of Vaux-Andigney and St. Souplet.

News flashed through the hospital that Americans with the French had captured the last portion of the Kriemhilde line on a wide front from the Meuse to the Argonne Forest.

Lieutenant Bessington listened to the cheers from the wounded soldiers, as some of them attempted to rise from their cots to cheer.

Lieutenant Bessington realized his inability to cope with the others who were ready and willing to go to the front, but with his plans before him he felt cheered to feel that some day he would do his bit in this great war. Thus he was satisfied, for he knew that he would do the bit of a Black American in France before peace came to the world.

There was a stir and many faces were beaming with delight as a tall, stately figure wearing a most benevolent and encouraging smile upon his face, walked down between the row of white cots upon which lay the wounded of America's heroes.

The American General was led to a room where Lieutenant Bessington lay upon his cot. He attempted to rise to salute the General as he entered, but his strength failed him, and he fell back upon his pillow.

The General walked up to his cot, drew a chair forward and sat down. He showed signs of the great strain he had been under; his face, though beaming with a sunny smile, was careworn and weary.

Heavy counter-attacks on the American front told of the most stubborn fighting that was under way. To the east the American

center was progressing better and the General felt a sense of relief in that.

Several minutes passed. The General looked up suddenly, as a tired General with the weight of the Nation's success upon his shoulders.

"You are wounded?" said the General, in his commanding, but sympathetic, voice.

"Yes, General," said Lieutenant Bessington proudly.

"I have the full account of your bravery at sea, and I wish to inform you that your country is your debtor."

"Thank you, sir."

"You are to be awarded a distinguished service cross for your gallantry at sea," spoke the General in solemn tones.

"But you have not mentioned the lad who was with me in every attempt I have made to defend my country. He played a large part in the rescue work, and also in the capture and guarding of those German spies," said Lieutenant Bessington, seriously.

"While I made no mention of the lad, he was also recommended for bravery at sea."

"General, I have a request to make of you, if I may?" spoke Lieutenant Bessington, with his eyes resting full upon the face of the General.

"You may make your request known, and if it is possible, why it will be the pleasure of your country to grant it through me."

"Well, instead of awarding me the service cross, will you permit me to prove my ability further as an American?"

"In what way?" spoke the General in a surprised voice.

"Well, some time ago, that is, in 1911, I visited this country and I am sure that one of the Germans whom we arrested on board the Liner was associated with certain supposed Frenchmen. My employer was associated with the Foreign Detective Agency, and I learned many things while traveling and visiting France, England and Germany."

"Then you have visited this country before?"

"Yes, indeed, and I learned a great deal about this present war, even though each country we visited seemed at peace with each other, still they were virtually at war."

The General looked at Lieutenant Bessington with a certain pride beaming from his kind eyes. He began to realize that if he

were to listen to a request from the Lieutenant, he must do so at once, as he was growing weaker.

So Lieutenant Bessington was asked by America's beloved General what he wanted his country to do for him.

"General, I am a Negro, and as such I shall ask this reward instead of a service cross: Allow me to track those Germans to their hole here on French soil? In behalf of my race I am asking that you permit me to prove my manhood.

"We, as a race, have proven our strength, our loyalty and our faith to our country; and now we plead for a chance to prove our manhood," Lieutenant Bessington spoke vehemently.

"The blood of every Negro boy spilled on the shell-torn fields of France cries to America through you to lift up your voice in the name of Democracy for justice for the Negro. From every hospital bed where a Negro boy lies gassed, wounded and dying; from every cage in Germany that holds a fearless Negro boy in cruel confinement; from every dugout or watery trench in France, Belgium, Russia and Italy, comes the cries of the ever-faithful and loyal Negroes.

"Never, no, never, has one member of my race been branded as a traitor to his country. The Negro has borne the anguish and torture of the super-human by those whom he is now dying to defend. And it is for their sakes that I plead for a chance to prove to the world the manhood of a true Black American.

"We have given our lives, our money and labor to the only country we know and wish to honor, and we are now ready for our share in the world's Democracy."

By this time the General discovered that Lieutenant Bessington was in need of stimulants as he talked on, breathing laboriously. The stimulant was given and Lieutenant Bessington was allowed to continue:

"You are wise, as well as kind, General," said Lieutenant Bessington, a smile suffusing his dark, rugged face, which had been rendered more rugged by the pain he was suffering, but was determined to conceal from the General for fear he may have deferred the request until he was stronger. And Lieutenant Bessington knew that the very fact that he could carry out his plans would hasten his recovery.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN.

America's General was intensely interested to know the smallest, as well as the largest, desire of this heroic black man.

"Is there anything else you wish to say, Lieutenant Bessington?" spoke the General in his commanding military voice.

"Your Honor, I have still another request before I finish: That in whatever rank or position you may place me when I am fit for duty, that you will give me the lad who so manfully assisted me in the rescue work and the arrest of those German spies, and in every struggle at sea."

"You may have that, also."

"One thing more, General: The German who shot me is closely allied with certain supposed Americans here in France. A certain house in Paris is the headquarters of spies, but they are supposed to be Americans.

"If you will give him his freedom and allow me to track him to his hole, I am positive that I will be able to unearth some foreign plots in Paris."

The General looked long and hard at Lieutenant Bessington; stroking his mustache, he said:

"Lieutenant Bessington, in the glory of your young manhood, you imagine you can accomplish great things in these perilous times, but that is indeed a serious request you are making."

"Yes, sir, I realize it is. But the thing that I desire to accomplish for my race is serious, too." The General looked at him for a moment thoughtfully, then he replied:

"All right, I agree. Anything more?"

"Yes, sir; there is still something more. May I have one of the best automobiles at my command? And may the lad accompany me?"

A puzzled expression swept over the General's face as he stood looking earnestly at the black Lieutenant.

"I agree; anything more?"

Lieutenant Bessington sat upon the edge of his cot, his dark rugged face wreathed in a pleasing smile. All this cordial kindness and attention by this great General to a man of color put him more at ease even with himself.

"But suppose I want too much, sir?"

"Go ahead."

"Very well, sir, I shall, and what I ask is this: That you give me a written permit, written in your hand, sir, bearing the signatures of Generals Haig and Foch, which will give me every latitude in France in the capacity of Lieutenant, calling for any assistance that can be of use to me in any part of France?"

"Are you sure that you know enough about France to take such a responsibility upon yourself as to attempt this task?"

"I do, sir; for the six months I spent here were not spent in vain, for I made a careful study of the place and people, as I was thrown much with those from whom I was able to learn a great deal."

Again the General looked at Lieutenant Bessington with a puzzled gaze, but he nodded acquiescence. He looked at him for a moment with the eye of a leader who was in the habit of judging men and reckoning them at their true value.

He could well judge that the man before him was no boaster, but even though his opportunities limited his field of action, still it was plain that he was a man of action and a man of his word who went straight ahead and kept his promises.

He had to admit to himself that he was taken back at the cool, deliberate way this young Negro went about things and expressed his purposes, as if he had them mapped out and studied to perfection.

"Lieutenant Bessington, you shall have what you ask, but I must still further impress upon your mind the seriousness of your attempted efforts. I realize that you are seized with a keen desire to defend the honor of your race, even as you have striven to protect that of your country's flag, by the heroic service you and the young Negro lad rendered the survivors on the wrecked vessel and the skillful arrest of those German spies."

Lieutenant Bessington was now sitting upright on his cot; his arm was bandaged, but his face showed no sign of fatigue. He was much moved by the voice and attitude of this great General, whose energy and coolness had saved the honor of America in Mexico, and whose life was again in the balance now in France for his flag. He rose to salute him for his generous words of cheer.

But the General seeing his weakness, for his strength had begun

to fail him, so he gave him his hand and exclaimed in a kind and almost affectionate voice:

"Lie down, Lieutenant, for you will need all your strength for the task you have chosen for yourself."

The dark rugged face of the Lieutenant was overshadowed with a pleasing smile, as he threw himself back upon his pillow, supporting his wounded arm with his strong hand.

Lieutenant Bessington was not able to leave his bed for several days, and he was permitted to have Sam again with him. It was hard to tell who was the happiest when Sam entered Lieutenant Bessington's room, where he had been placed as a mark of distinction after the General's visit.

Sam told the Lieutenant all he had been able to learn about the American Negroes. Although, as yet, he had heard nothing directly from the boys from Georgia, still it was believed that they had a large part to play in the battle which had occasioned so much comment, as that company was made up of some boys from every state in the Union. Lieutenant Bessington realized at once that it was his Division which was in the thickest of the fray.

A proud expression suffused his face as he said: "I am proud of that news, Sam." Sam looked long and hard at the Lieutenant as if to see if there were any trace of regret on his countenance. But the face before him was flooded with joy and satisfaction.

"The account was given to the effect that Lieutenant Rauren, of Company 1, was killed there and Tom Lake in the meantime, whose company had come into the valley, was killed by a high explosive shell. That night the enemy threw a large number of gas shells into the place and gassed many men who had been gassed before. The next morning, with half of the company disabled from gas and many wounded, they got orders to move up the railroad track ahead. When the enemy saw their determination they left their guns and ran. And they had lots of fun picking them up." Sam told this in almost breathless haste, as he seemed to be afraid that he would forget the most important part.

After several days the Lieutenant was able to leave the hospital.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN.

A few weeks later Lieutenant Bessington and Sam left the General's headquarters in an automobile, carrying food, water and clothing.

They were now traveling about somewhere in France. They noted with pride and satisfaction that they were the center of attraction wherever they went.

Lieutenant Bessington went about his work in such a silent way that even Sam, who was his constant companion, rarely ever knew what his purposes were.

Lieutenant Bessington had gotten permission to discard his uniform, and if necessary go against his country, in order to gain desired information.

They had come to the outskirts of a little village. Lieutenant Bessington saw an automobile carrying four passengers and flying an American flag as it swept past them.

"Do you see that car, Sam? Well, I am in doubt as to whether it is really an American-owned car. Did you notice how the driver looked at me? Well, that driver is none other than the German we arrested on board the liner, who wore the Imperial uniform.

"I am going to start up speed. He thinks he knows me. If he does he will do everything to keep me from keeping up with him, or knowing his whereabouts. For he will always stand in dread of me. Here you take the wheel while I add a few touches to my face to disfigure it. What are you laughing about? I suppose you are thinking that I do not need to disfigure my face any more than it is already."

Sam looked up into the Lieutenant's face; his own wore a satisfied smile, as he laughingly said:

"Lieutenant Bessington, I have no criticism to pass upon your noble face. There never was a greater character than yours, so why should you wish to discuss your looks?"

"Thank you, my dear boy," said Lieutenant Bessington in an almost solemn tone.

By this time they were about to pass the same automobile, when Lieutenant Bessington turned his car and took another road.

"Why, what on earth did you do that for?" spoke Sam, im-

pulsively. "Don't you see that you put yourself in position to lose track of the car you meant to follow?"

"I meant to do just what I did, Sam; did you not see those men watching us? And did you not hear one of them, as they said: 'Wer ist es,' in German? which is to say in English, 'Who is it?' Well, he was asking the driver, for evidently, he told them that we were following them and that we were American Negroes who had arrested him on board the liner."

"Why, I beg your pardon, Lieutenant, I only thought that you were forgetting your intention of following them; that was all I meant in my stupidity, for I should have known that you knew what you were doing."

"Why, that is perfectly all right, Sam. Suppose I had forgotten? It would have been the most natural thing for you to have reminded me, like the thoughtful lad that you are."

Lieutenant Bessington and Sam were both fluent speakers of English, French and German, and it was their intelligence which had won for them the confidence of the American General and other officials in the army.

The Lieutenant thought that he had better tell Sam all concerning the German whom he had gotten the General to release. So he drove along leisurely, as he related to Sam the conversation between himself and America's greatest General. No one would have believed that he was keeping a close watch on the car which was sailing along at a rapid rate on another road.

He was simply giving them a chance to feel convinced that they were mistaken in the two Negroes. Then he would take up his chase again.

"Sam, you are no longer an irresponsible mess boy. I want you to prove yourself a man. The commission you received last week as Corporal must only make you aspire to become the head of your Division."

Sam tittered, thus checking the Lieutenant for a moment, but soon he continued:

"You are an American soldier, and a seasoned hero at that; prove valiant and win for yourself honor and cover yourself with glory for the sake of your own race."

Night was coming on and Lieutenant Bessington was glad, as it would enable him to trace the fleeing car with more ease. "It

will not be good for us nor our cause if we attempt to make our discoveries in the day. But we had better wait until the evening shadows fall upon us. Then we will be safe.

"This village seems to be a sleepy little place, and I think it will be like taking candy from a baby to get all the information we need about that house you see there to your right in the distance. In 1911 I visited that house and I believe that it is destined to bring us much honor by the things it will reveal to us.

"Of course, I hold papers on my person which gives me the right to search any suspicious property, but unless I feel it the wisest thing, I shall not do so."

"Well, don't you think that the village constable here could help us in some way to get a clue to those pretended Germans?"

"I do not think so, Sam; they would give away everything, and we would not accomplish anything. We had better wait until dark. It is risky, but even if they catch us they will not place much significance on our being around. They will evidently think that we are some of the laboring class of our race from America, who are too ignorant to be able to understand things about here. And most likely they will feel that we are trying to show off by riding in an automobile. I, at least, want them to feel that way, and we must do everything to lead them to think so, as it will make it very much easier for us to accomplish all we hope to in a short time."

"I am with you," said Sam, impulsively. "I will do whatever you say, Lieutenant."

Lieutenant Bessington cranked his car, and turned to leave the spot where they had been standing, while he waited to see the car which he was watching, drive into the yard of the house he had showed Sam.

Sam, being tired, reclined, stretching himself out in the automobile as they rode along at a rapid rate. "I never thought that you nor any other Negro could ever request and get so much from the Government, and in France at that."

Sam's voice became almost feminine, as he was weary. Lieutenant Bessington stared at him for a moment, as the voice reminded him so vividly of Walla.

Just as they were about to turn out the road they had been traveling into a road that led eastward to another small village where Lieutenant Bessington had visited while he was in France in

1911, a small boy came towards the car in which they were riding, crying in broken French:

"America's advance in the Argonne German retreat is being carried out with difficulty."

Lieutenant Bessington called the boy in French, and handed him his price for the paper as he brought the automobile to a standstill. This bit of news served to heighten the ambition of the two young American Negroes. They felt a sense of silent pride as they read the account of the Americans' successes.

They spent the rest of the early evening riding around and about the two villages. Lieutenant Bessington seemed satisfied with the discoveries he had made. But Sam could see nothing he had accomplished, and at times felt that they were wasting time.

While Lieutenant Bessington drove along under the rays of the full moon, meditating upon his plans, Sam looked up into his face lazily, and said:

"Say, old pal! why that puzzled expression? Are you puzzled about the house you want to enter and how you can best effect an entrance, or about some of those paper-doll girls of America?"

Sam was eternally berating and underestimating the women of his race, to the fury and rage of Lieutenant Bessington, who always defended and offered to do so with his life's blood.

"Women, without exception, are weak and worthless where strength of brain and soul is required. Don't you think so, Lieutenant?"

The Lieutenant bristled at this statement. "Sam," he said, in a cold, even voice, as he brought the car almost to a standstill, "you are entirely mistaken is all I have to say on the subject."

The sentence was delivered in such a manner that it gave the lie direct. Sam sensed this, and flushed hotly, the effect showing in his dark eyes.

Lieutenant Bessington had often appeared perplexed, and when questioned by Sam, he would tell him that he always reminded him of some friend he knew. Sam felt sure that it evidently must have been a lady friend to have occasioned such serious thoughts and, too, so often. So he took a delight in teasing him.

Sam said cutely: "Are we quarreling, Lieutenant?" Again Sam's voice was so soft that it startled the Lieutenant. He squirmed

under the fresh sting of Sam's voice, and the words contained in his thrust.

It placed him on the defensive, a position which he somehow hated with Sam, as it was Sam's delight to corner him, as he termed it. Sam laughed outright for a minute, then he put forth a hand and laid it gently upon the Lieutenant's shoulder, and said cutely:

"Well, old pal, I am sure that you must be badly affected with the malady, love, for you are showing every sign of it, even though you are to be the 'Black American' of your lady-fair, who must reside somewhere in our dear old America.

"But there must come no barrier between our friendship, not even love, with all its charms and varied pleasures. You can make good without me, but I can not make even a rag-doll without eyes without you. You must remember that our ambitions are one, and our interests are the same; therefore, we are necessary to each other." The Lieutenant looked at Sam with a great wonder in his eyes. "Now, isn't that true, my friend?"

Lieutenant Bessington's features became less rigid, and his usual smile encricled his dark face, as he put on more speed, for he had brought the car to a standstill, so intent was his mind upon what they were saying.

They were now on good terms and were driving at a pretty rapid rate, chatting gayly, when Sam suddenly thought of a letter that Lieutenant Bessington had received, but had forgotten to open. So Sam reminded him of the fact that he had not looked over his last mail, and suggested that that was a good time to do so, as he would drive while he did so.

As Lieutenant Bessington read the third letter his face became death-like, and he bent his head forward, supported in his two strong hands, and he gave vent to sobs that told Sam that something was wrong.

"Why, Lieutenant, surely nothing has happened to your folks at home, at least, I hope not? Pray tell me what hurts you so badly as to make a strong man like you weep like a woman?"

For an answer, Lieutenant Bessington laid the letter in Sam's free hand while he again exchanged places with him and drove along leisurely while Sam read the saddest of all news that could come to a soldier away from his home and friends.

Lieutenant Bessington had no mother, so Walla Davis, the girl whom he loved with his whole soul, took the place of mother and sweetheart in his affections.

The letter was written to inform Lieutenant Bessington of Walla's mysterious disappearance, and of the news which had reached her home of her death a few months after her disappearance. This letter was evidently written by a friend who knew of Lieutenant Bessington's love for Walla. It was signed "Gertrude," and written in a neat, plain hand.

The reader will know at once that the letter was written by Gertrude Langston, Walla's supposed best friend. No doubt she was glad to inform Lieutenant Bessington of Walla's death, feeling sure now that the only barrier between her and the man she loved had been removed forever.

"Never mind, Lieutenant, there never was such a sorrow but that the joy that came after would recompense all suffering of the present hour. Somehow I felt that your mail might have been important is why I reminded you of the unread letter.

"If I were in your place I would not sorrow so deeply for the loss of one little brown Southern girl, for there are always as good fish in the sea as there ever was caught out." Sam said this as an attempt to change the course of the Lieutenant's thoughts, as he knew that such assertions would make him angry, and thus he would for a time forget his sorrow; even though that was a peculiar way of showing friendly sympathy, still Sam secured good results. For Lieutenant Bessington turned to Sam, all trace of sorrow gone, his face burning with unspeakable rage, which flashed from his angry eyes.

"Sam, there is one thing I must say to you before we can ever be able to enjoy a genuine friendship: You have a very uncanny way of speaking of our women; you are mistaken in your impression of them. I must confess, though, that I believe that it is largely assumed simply to annoy me, since you know that such remarks irritate me. But I want to ask you what kind of friend do you call yourself?"

"Why, Lieutenant, we are the best of friends, I am sure. If I have offended you, I beg your pardon a thousand times. We can still be friends and remain interested in each other even if our views about the beautiful, young, brown damsels are different, can't we?" said Sam, as he drew himself up nearer to the Lieutenant, and nestled close to his side.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

They were moving swiftly forward on a smooth road on the outskirts of the village they had visited that afternoon, when they came upon those supposed Americans, but who were no less than German spies, who were going towards the house which was destined to make them famous.

Lieutenant Bessington was at a loss to understand his newly-made friend, but there was a certain fascination about him that made his friendship desirable. He often remonstrated with him, as he possessed traits which were not suitable for a soldier, as habit is the part of us which we can not easily get rid of.

As they drew near the house on the hill Lieutenant Bessington saw an old man, and noticed that he seemed to be keeping an eye on their car. He gave the car over to Sam to drive, as Sam was a good driver, and he told him to drive swiftly by the old man who was walking along in a decrepit attitude. Sam did so, and no sooner had they passed than the old man straightened up and began to follow the car in leaps and bounds. The Lieutenant saw this through the opening at the back of the car and communicated it to Sam, then he again took the car and turned from the road on which they were driving into a narrow driveway which brought them to the back of the mysterious house on the hill.

He brought the car to a standstill and looked out as if to ascertain whether there was any tire trouble. He saw by a swift glance that the old man was following stealthily behind them.

"Sam, that man is a German spy. Whatever happens to me, you watch your chance and go to the nearest camp and bring help to me at once; tell all you have been able to see and bring a detachment to that house, for I shall be a prisoner there, if they do not kill me. Now, I am going to virtually give myself up to this spy in order to get the desired information that I am sure I will be able to get by allowing him to feel that he has captured me. For this man is the same German who visited my cabin on board the liner, and whom I arrested later in his stateroom. I asked for his release after we reached France that I might be able to track him to his hole, as I am sure I have seen that face before when I visited France in 1911; also I saw him when we paid a long visit to Germany. I

am sure I know the man, and will be able to tell him his own name.

"Now, I want you to keep your seat and the minute you see that he has me bested, you start for the nearest camp and lose no time in bringing men sufficient to arrest a big gang of spies. He will have no idea that you know anything, but will think that you are a coward and mean to escape with your life."

Suddenly the man coughed, and they knew that he was near and wanted to attract attention. Lieutenant Bessington cranked his car, as if to move on, for he had brought it to a standstill while he talked with Sam and laid all his plans for Sam's escape and his rescue. The man put his hand to his head and groaned aloud, and reeling fell to the ground.

"Now is your chance, Sam; go for dear life as soon as you see him attack me, as I am sure that is his intention just as soon as I bend over him to ascertain what his trouble is he means to overpower me and take you and I prisoners to that house, and if he succeeds we will never come out alive, as he suspects me as being the man that I am, who discovered that he was a German spy instead of an American Red Cross nurse."

As the last words died away in a hoarse, yet soft, whisper, Lieutenant Bessington left the car and went up to the form lying upon the ground. No sooner had he bent over the apparently lifeless form than the man threw his arms about the Lieutenant's neck and brought him to the ground beside him.

Sam waited long enough to see that they were struggling, and with great fear looming up in his heart for the Lieutenant he cranked his car and reluctantly started for the nearest camp. But he kept an eye upon the struggling pair until the distance prevented him from seeing further what was going on between them.

Lieutenant Bessington suddenly gave way under a heavy blow dealt him by the emissary. Seeing that he had him bested, he drew a twine from his pocket and fastened both hands of Lieutenant Bessington behind him; drawing a handkerchief from his pocket he bound it about his face so that he could neither see nor speak. Then he threw the limp form across his shoulders and went hurriedly towards the house with his heavy burden, muttering as he went:

"You will never trouble a Hohenzoller again, and you shall pay for your interference into Germany's affairs; in the like manner shall your American General and all other American puppies who

would dare leave their country to come to France, thinking to save France from her servitude to the German Empire." This was said in vehement German tones, which fell upon the ears of his prisoner.

The moon was shining bright, and with his shoulders thrown to the back of the German, Lieutenant Bessington kept his eyes and the muscles of his face in constant motion until the cloth which held his eyes in blindfold became loose and slipped down, leaving a part of his eyes free. He saw that he was being carried to the house through the rear, and that it was a wooded grove, making it easy to commit any deed. So he knew that if he were to preserve his life that he had to act with promptness.

His captor deposited his burden on the ground in the grass and went to a small gate and was about to make the signal for the guard to open it when the Lieutenant made a noise which attracted his attention, and just as he turned to make a step forward he found himself helpless and blood began to gush from his throat. He fell limp and bleeding to the ground.

Lieutenant Bessington was fortunate in that he had not been disarmed. His captor was so sure that he had him securely bound that he did not search for weapons. So the Lieutenant's smokeless and noiseless revolver was left in his hip-pocket where he had placed it as he left the car upon going to see what the trouble was with the supposed decrepit old man.

The Lieutenant had succeeded in getting his hands, though tied, to his hip-pocket and brought forth his revolver just as the spy was about to give the signal for the guard who was forced to remain on the inside to keep down suspicion, as the house was supposed to be a home for the widows of France and Belgium, but which was in reality the secret French palace of the Kaiser, who carried on a form of Government and secret warfare in an underground apartment.

This secret passage into Germany through Belgium from France was the work of the Kaiser, which took him about thirty years to have completed under his direction, even while the countries were virtually at peace, so far as the appearance of things were. That was one of the secret reasons why the German armies could and did demand passage through Belgium and France.

CHAPTER TWENTY.

From the same pocket Lieutenant Bessington was able to draw his pocket-knife, which he opened by holding it between his two hands while he lay on his stomach, and soon he had the cords which bound him fast cut in two, and once more his hands were free for action.

He got up hastily and went over to the lifeless form lying upon the ground, and hastily tore away the cloth which had bound his face, and bandaged the throat of the suffering German spy, for he could see by the bright rays of the moonlight that the man was suffering and bleeding profusely.

Lieutenant Bessington felt that there would be little danger, if any, of being discovered, since the main foe was silenced, if he continued to act cautiously. But the man before him was dying as fast as he could, and although he intended to take his life, still he wanted to save him if possible. He remembered the brandy which he had put in his pocket, so that in case he was attacked and grew weak he might save his own life by taking it. He took the flask from his pocket, uncorked it and put it to the suffering emissary's mouth, while he raised his head and forced the liquid down his throat, saying:

"You shall not die at my hand, if God will help me to save you. I know you would kill me like a dog and drink to my torture, but I shall prove the man and save you if I can and bring you to trial for your crime. For I condemn murder and advocate justice to all men, even a criminal. Perhaps my mercy for you may be the cause of my race sharing more freely in the justice and freedom of the world, after the German Empire has fallen."

After some few minutes of silent waiting and watching, the Lieutenant saw the respiration of the man begin to pick up and he again put the flask to his lips and said: "Drink, man, drink, for your life, drink."

Suddenly along the road he was sure that he heard sounds of approaching horsehoofs and the rumbling sound of an automobile. He listened for a second, and was certain, and knew that Sam with help was near. He lifted the wounded man from the ground

and threw him across his shoulder in the same manner which he had brought him to that same spot less than two hours ago.

Suddenly there was a struggle, and the form of the wounded man trembled and seemed to have been having convulsions. The sound of the approaching Regiment, or Division, seemed more and more distinct, and Lieutenant Bessington did not want to lose any time in gaining the road, for he was sure that ere the road was reached that they would be coming near the house, and he was anxious to stop them before they got too near the house for fear they might spoil the chance of capturing all the inmates of the mysterious house.

So he moved along as swiftly as he could under his heavy burden. Although the man in his arms seemed to be dying, still Lieutenant Bessington held to him with the tenacity of a dead man's grasp.

In fifteen minutes more the Company that was sent to rescue Lieutenant Bessington entered the driveway on foot, led by Sam, who had left his car on the road while he led the men through the wooded path in the direction he knew that Lieutenant Bessington had been carried.

In the stillness of the night Sam heard groans, and felt sure it was the Lieutenant who had been left as dead on the side of the grassy path. But under the soft rays of the moonlight he caught sight of a figure coming towards them, bearing something on his shoulder. Sam halted and the men with him drew back into the shadow until they could ascertain who was coming in their direction.

Lieutenant Bessington recognized Sam and gave him their signal. Sam signalled the men to follow him, and in five minutes they had relieved the Lieutenant of his burden, and the wounded man was receiving medical attention at the gentle hands of the Black American Army surgeon.

The mysterious house was surrounded and escape was impossible from any point of view. Lieutenant Bessington took two big swallows of the brandy, as he felt the need of a stimulant; he offered Sam some, but Sam declined, as he said that he was sure he was less in need of a stimulant then than he would be if he was sitting upon the Kaiser's head offering a toast to America.

The brandy taken, Lieutenant Bessington felt that he might dare continue his task of capturing the gang of Germans who

were running this house. He told Sam that he was going to enter the house with him alone and leave the soldiers to stand guard on the outside to come to their rescue at the slightest signal.

Sam was ready and willing for the daring adventure, but felt that at least three soldiers should be allowed to follow at a distance, so that in case of a sudden attack they might offer assistance. The Lieutenant consented to that, and it so happened that young Green, from Morehouse College, was to be among the number who were chosen to follow the Negro Lieutenant on his wonderful adventure.

Suddenly Lieutenant Bessington remembered that he was ravishingly hungry, but he did not allow his thoughts to dwell long on food and his appetite nor the pleasure of satisfying it. It was vastly more important that he should put himself and Sam in a safe position where they could gain the best advantage and effect an entrance to the mysterious house.

The Lieutenant and Sam took to the path which led around a grove of trees taking them into the front entrance leading up a broad walk to the porch around the front of the house. Young Green and the other four soldiers followed cautiously behind the two.

They went upon the porch and rang the bell. The Lieutenant had an idea that they were being watched. The door was opened by a tall middle-aged woman, who eyed the two narrowly. They went inside and the door was closed behind them. No sooner had the door been closed than the woman pressed a button and two men came from an adjoining room and stood facing the two Negroes, with perfect hatred in their glances.

"Explain your business to this house?" said the largest of the two men.

"That is easy," said the Lieutenant, in German. The two men and the woman looked in wonder at the two Negroes.

"As you can see I am a Negro, and an American Negro, at that. I was forced to come over to fight with the Americans in France against the German people, who have never been guilty of mistreating the Negro, only he refused to allow him to buy property and settle down on German soil. But in my country they permit us to live there, but without Governmental protection. My master is about to have your house pulled, as we call it in America.

They have been spying on you all for several days, and today they caught one of your men and by now he is near an American prison-camp.

"I am running the risk of my life, and of this lad's, to come here at this hour to tell you."

"Vell, you have lied enough. Donnerwetter," said he, as he motioned to the other German to take Sam. For he made no pretense of being French or American. He was German and didn't seem to care who knew it, as he ordered the two Negroes carried to the room on the lower floor.

It was past midnight, and the widows of France and Belgium who made their home in this house, which was supposed to be a home for the widowed women of France and Belgium, given over by a rich American man, whose sister acted as matron and keeper of the home, were asleep with no fear of hurt, harm or danger. Not a man was supposed to be on the place, and it was no small wonder that the greatest precautions were used in removing the two Negroes from the first floor to the underground apartment by way of a secret passage.

At first the Lieutenant was sure that the men had given up all pretense and secrecy in dealing with them, so he felt sure that he had been watched, and that they were doubtless onto some of their game. He recoiled angrily at the sheer unnecessarily brutal way in which they had dealt with he and Sam, as they offered no resistance, it shocked and angered them, but after all they were more human than the lynch mobs of America. For they did not disarm them. They were bound to the wall by a chain which had attached a pair of handcuffs, and left there alone for about thirty minutes. Seeing that they were free to talk, since they were left securely bound apart from each other, the Lieutenant told Sam just what to do in case he was able to effect his release.

"As I entered the front door I left a bomb. In two hours it will explode and we are pretty safe here, but what I fear is that the lives of those widowed women of France and Belgium who will perish with those Germans if we can not rescue them," said the Lieutenant, as he tried to fathom some way of releasing Sam if he could not get free himself.

Again Lieutenant Bessington was able by constant twisting and moving of the body to get his smokeless and noiseless revolver

in his hand. But the only way he could shoot would be to turn his back to his object, as his hands were held fast by handcuffs. Suddenly he heard footsteps, and turning his back he was soon able by the aid of his tongue and teeth to bring from his pocket a small mirror. This he caught between his lips and by hard straining he was able to hold it before his eyes, and just as the form of the man entered the heavy steel door he fired, and the man fell. Then he turned the weapon on the chains which held Sam, Sam directing the aim of the revolver which the Lieutenant held in his hand the best he could. Again he fired. This time he disconnected the chain which held Sam's ankles fast, but the ball penetrated Sam's right ankle.

"It matters not if you are wounded; go for your life through that open door. I am sure it takes you up a short flight of stairs to the ground. Bring the men at once, and save those women with their children who seek shelter here by all means."

Sam stumbled over the body of the man who had fallen in the doorway, but he did not look behind him, but made his way up the short flight of stairs and reached the ground, where a light rain had begun to fall, and the moon had hid itself beneath the dark clouds which floated above.

Just as Sam got the remaining chain from his ankle he was certain that he heard footsteps behind him, so he turned from the path and laid on the ground rolling farther among the grass in the shaded spot. Soon the footsteps died away, and Sam knew that the person had passed, but was waiting somewhere near.

All at once he seemed to lose control of his senses, and a groan escaped his throat that brought him back to himself again, as he was sure that the person was coming in his direction. He was helpless and would offer no resistance.

"Who comes here?" Sam spoke before he knew it, for he was fast losing consciousness from the loss of blood. He was weak and fell back limp upon the ground. The man came forward and bent over him and lifted him to his shoulder and started for the road where a waiting automobile stood.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE.

Lieutenant Bessington was aware of a sense of fatigue. Leaning his head against the wall he closed his eyes and breathed heavily. Just then his quick ears caught the sound of voices. He listened; there was no mistake, they were men.

He began to realize his danger, but breathed a sigh of relief when he remembered that Sam was safe and maybe in time to save the women who took shelter in this home.

The sound of voices came from the rear of him this time. The men were entering by the way the other man whom he had killed had entered. Turning his head, he faced the men who were approaching.

"Bring the dog to me in this room," said a man who wore a robe of gray cloth. Lieutenant Bessington knew that resistance was useless, and that he was helpless unless Sam and the men were in time to save him. He was led into another room resembling an apartment of some great Lord of England or France.

Lieutenant Bessington found himself trembling. He knew that it was due to the lack of food, but was determined to prove the man of nerves in spite of his condition. He was led up to a man who was seated in a large chair at a long table with his back to the door. About him stood armed men ready to protect him with their lives if need be. Lieutenant Bessington faced him and almost fainted as he looked into the face of the man whom the world had suffered so much torture for, and for whom so many homes had been made cheerless, and for whom so many lives had been offered up as sacrifices that he might rule the earth with his iron will and hand.

He was not as young looking as Lieutenant Bessington had expected to see him, for the Lieutenant was one of those Americans who intended to march into Berlin and get the Kaiser of Germany and present him to America for a Christmas gift in 1918. He saw a man before him who was nervous and deformed, for one of his arms was withered and lay limp upon his bosom while he toyed continually with anything that was in reach of his sound hand.

His face was haggard and worned, his eyes were bloodshot and showed signs of heavy drinking, and he seemed to be in a state of impatience and unrest all the time. He did not seem satisfied

with the hardest words he uttered to his subjects, and his power did not seem to satisfy him.

Lieutenant Bessington stood before him as a condemned man until he spoke to him again, then he mustered up all his strength and looked and talked like a hero.

"You shall be shot like a dog for daring to spy on this house."

"Why, why, should any one wish to spy on the home of the widows of France and Belgium? You surely know that Americans are friendly towards the Belgian and French women, even the Black Americans. Of course, no one would have dreamed of seeing the Emperor of Germany of all other persons in the world."

"You are indeed fearless to dare risk visiting France at such an inopportune time as this, my dear hated Kaiser." Lieutenant Bessington's coolness had a telling effect upon that great warrior. But he did not know what it cost the Lieutenant to retain himself, for his strength was just about to desert him.

"My dear Kaiser, I beg you to listen to me before you have me shot, for the American troops are sure to carry the victory back to America. Your armies are already beaten, still you go on sacrificing your best manhood and your country will soon fall into the hands of the Allies. Your own Allies have deserted you; they have accepted the terms laid down by our Allies."

"You liar; you cur; you contemptible Negro slave! To dare dictate to the Emperor of Germany!"

"No, I do not attempt to dictate to the Kaiser, for God Himself could not do that to you, but since you have come across my path on French soil, I felt it would be a kindness for me to inform you of your true position. And I would advise you to abdicate and make for Holland, as now is your only chance for escape."

The Kaiser looked at the Lieutenant with a disgust that was akin to hate, but the Lieutenant saw that the wasted form before him was struggling with his thoughts. For it was evident that he had become weary of the struggles and defeat on every hand. His wrinkled features became less rigid and he looked into Lieutenant Bessington's face and said sadly:

"Well, I guess you are right. My time has come. Defeat has covered me on every hand; my Allies have forsaken me, and Gott is nowhere to be found."

Just then a heavy crash came which seemed to rend the air.

The nervous Emperor trembled and turned to his guards, who stood by, and ordered them to take him from the place at once.

Soon the entire place was in ruins. Most of the women had been rescued by the soldiers who overpowered the secret guards of the house and entered the house, bringing the women from their beds.

For Sam had been picked up by young Green, and as soon as he turned his flashlight on him he knew that Sam had news of importance, so he sought to revive him, and succeeded in a few minutes after reaching the car. And men were sent to the house to arouse the sleeping women and children, but no one in the underground apartment knew what was going on until the bomb exploded.

After some hours of hard work, an entrance to the underground apartment was effected, and Lieutenant Bessington's lifeless form was found buried among the wreckage. Sam was too weak to come, but the news was carried to him by Jim Green.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO.

There were weeks of fierce fighting all along the Western front. America's blockade of Germany was a practical success; French and English airplanes were flooding the air around and about Germany; Germany's submarine warfare had proven a complete failure. Heralded cry of peace was heard everywhere. The whole world was in a tumult; great agitation and violent commotion followed the news that the Kaiser had abdicated, and that Germany had accepted the peace terms of the Allies and America.

The glad news reached America by way of the United Press, and America went wild with the news of peace. But by the next morning the whole of America was limp and carried cold feet. For the news that reached the United States was misinterpreted.

No one told the real truth of the matter; no one seemed to have known that the Crown Prince had been wounded by a Negro Lieutenant, and that the Kaiser had been captured in his underground palace which he had taken years to build in order to effectively carry on a successfully planned war with France.

For the Kaiser had directed many of the explosions in France from that secret palace of his, which was supposed to be a home for the friendless widows and their children of France and Belgium, owned and controlled by a rich American and superintended by his spinster sister.

The Kaiser had in a moment, when off his guard, consented to take the advice of the American Negro Lieutenant, and in the presence of his bodyguards he said he would abdicate, since there was no other way out for himself and his wounded son, the Crown Prince.

So, when the explosion came and the guards became separated from their leader, they were frightened and lost, and at once began to tell all whom they came in contact with that their Kaiser had abdicated and fled.

The Crown Prince had received an ugly wound in his throat, but because of the prompt attention of the American Red Cross and the care given him by the Black American Lieutenant who wounded him, he was soon recovering, but begged that his humiliation be

kept secret. So the news was to the effect that the Crown Prince was supposed to have been wounded, but no details followed.

The spirit of Russia seemed to catch hold on Germany as soon as the news reached the Empire that their leader, the Kaiser, had fled. Dr. Karl Liebnecht seized the opportunity at once and began to start trouble with the populace.

This news reached the nervous Emperor, so he hurriedly packed up all his belongings, and the last we heard of him he was headed for Holland, where his friend, Count Von Bentnick, seemed to be the only one to welcome him on Dutch soil.

Some few weeks later the Crown Prince recovered enough to travel, entered Holland, where he was hissed to scorn by a large crowd who had gathered about the station. As he descended from the railway car with a swaggering gait and wearing a fur coat, howls of execration arose from the thousands gathered outside the station gates. The outburst of hostility seemed to perturb him somewhat.

He affected indifference as he entered the little tugboat. He lit a cigarette and soon the tug was lost in the fog amidst the angry shouts of the populace.

The yacht, which was to have taken the ex-Crown Prince to his future abode in Holland, became grounded in the fog, so the tugboat was used instead.

Several weeks passed now since the armistice had been signed, and the wounded men in France were looking forward to returning to America and their homes with great satisfaction, as they had been informed that they would be among the first to be sent back to America.

Jim Green remained constantly with Sam since he had been wounded, and now that the wounded were soon to return to America, he felt that he had better tell him the truth about Lieutenant Bessington, for fear that the shock of finding it out suddenly would prove more than he could bear.

"Well, Sam, old boy, you have been very brave; you have proven superhuman strength of character, and I feel that you are equal to the things you must bear in the future."

"For pity sakes, Jim, what news have you for me of Lieutenant Bessington? Is he dead? Has he been captured by those Germans, or wounded so badly that he can not recover and must die?

"No, I am glad to say that he is not dead, but wounded, and he will recover. He is very much alive, and asks to see you at once."

"Oh, Jim, you are the best and dearest friend in the whole world," said Sam, as he attempted to rise from his chair where he was sitting, for he forgot that he could not walk nor stand on his left foot as yet.

"Now, Jim, that you know all and that the entire struggle is over, will you tell Gastonia who I am before I see him? For I am sure that I would give myself away before every one, for the separation from him for these several weeks has taken all the strength that I have had to draw upon, to be able to hide my identity so successfully all these months."

"Yes, Walla, I will do that and more for you if you command it of me."

"But I do not command anything of you, Jim; I only ask the favor as a poor little wounded friend and comrade."

"Walla, you are more than friend and comrade to me, and all that I am you have inspired me to be it. I have told others that I was inspired by the man you love, Lieutenant Bessington, but it was you who inspired me. I know that loving him as you do you can not give me the hope which my very life cries for, but I want to ask you if I may always remain your true friend and big brother?"

"Jim, you do not only surprise me, but your confession causes my heart to ache for you. For if you love me, then your life will be lonely, no matter whom you may marry, and I should like to know that you were happy, even as I shall be. For no matter what befalls me, if God gives me Gastonia all to myself I shall be ever happy afterwards, and I do so wish that you could look forward to the same day of rest and gladness after this terrible war.

"I tell you what I will do, since we can never be man and wife and love as God would have us do, for you see, although you love me, that I love another, and that would be a sin; then, too, I could not turn from Gastonia, for I love him with my whole being; every part of me belongs to him, and to marry another would be a sin. But I shall find you one of the sweetest little wives in the whole world, one who will love you for herself, and who will be worthy of your great love and your big soul."

"Since that is the best that you can do for me, Walla, I shall

accept it, graciously," said Jim, in a dejected voice, although he tried to appear pleased.

Again Lieutenant Bessington was visited by America's great General, who was looking down upon the rugged face of the suffering Negro with a great pride beaming from his eyes.

"Well, Lieutenant Bessington, although you are painfully wounded and had to lose that right limb, do you know that you are the greatest hero of this great world-war? You wounded the Crown Prince and virtually captured the Kaiser, the world's greatest murderer. Even though the infamous beast escaped and fled from France by way of his secret tunnel, still you discovered it and caused him to abdicate at a moment when it was most effective. And today the world can boast of peace because of the heroism of a Black American?"

"Well, if this peace is to mean so much to France, Belgium, England and America, will it mean that all nations and races of the world will get their freedom and justice, General?"

"By all means, yes; how could we fight for and win Democracy unless we give to all races their freedom and give to them the justice due them?"

"That is what I was thinking of, General, for the Negro has played his part well, and he expects to share in the Democracy of the world, or I fear that there will be something doing on his part to find out the reason why?"

"You need give yourself no uneasiness, Lieutenant, for your country will look after your race's interest along with the interest of Belgium and France, or Germany, though a defeated people will ever have the Negro to wash the face of America with. For America claims to stand for justice for all the people, and to see to it that no race is oppressed or mistreated. I do not think that you will need to question America's honesty of purpose, for I am quite sure that America can ill-afford to forget the Negro and still retain the respect of the world as dictator of Democracy." The conversation ended, the General was just about to leave when Jim Green entered the room where Lieutenant Bessington lay upon his white cot with one leg gone, and an arm badly wounded, looking up into the General's face as he was about to bid him good-bye.

Green saluted the General with fearless military dignity, and asked to speak with the Lieutenant. The General stood for a

few moments before attempting to leave. Just as he turned to take leave of Lieutenant Bessington, Jim left the room and the Lieutenant extended his well hand to the General, and asked him to please be seated just a few moments until Lieutenant Green returned, as he had news of interest to unfold to him.

While they waited the General asked Lieutenant Bessington to give him a description of the Kaiser, as he looked after four years of war. "His hair is entirely gray, his face is drawn and very thin, his forehead is much wrinkled, he has a deformed side and a withered arm and hand. I think it is his left side and hand which is so affected. In spite of his nervous attitude he stood facing me with his withered hand drawn tightly across his chest, and looked down upon me with fierce anger burning from his eyes. Still he smiled sarcastically. He is tall and commanding in stature, and seems to have a wonderful endurance." It was very evident that something of a pleasing nature was about to take place, for the Lieutenant's features were relaxed and his dark face was wreathed in a pleasing smile, all the while he related the desired description of the Kaiser to the General.

Suddenly there was the sound of footsteps and soon Lieutenant Green entered bearing Sam in a rolling chair to Lieutenant Bessington's bedside. For a full minute there was an awkward silence. Then Lieutenant Bessington took hold of himself and raised upon his cot, and said as if in a dream:

"General, allow me to present to you our modern Joan of Arc. I have been in personal contact with this young Negro woman, and we have served side by side all these months and her identity has not been known to me until Lieutenant Green, who knew it from the beginning, told me that she had been wounded, and wanted to see me and have you know her since the war had ended."

Again there was a moment of silence, when the General spoke to the three Negroes, and assured them that their acts of bravery and their desires to serve well their country in the best possible way, even at any sacrifice, should be made known to the world and that the Black Americans would not only have á share in the Democracy of the world, but that they should have a seat at the Peace Table, and that their voice should be heard if he had his way.

After some cheery remarks from the General to the Negro Joan of Arc, he took leave of the three Negroes, who were to start for

America at once, as soon as it was possible to arrange their passage.

Jim felt that they would feel more comfortable alone, so he soon took leave of the wounded, yet happy, pair, and went to his tent, where he wrote Gertrude Langston a long letter telling her that Walla had been found, and was very much alive and happy. He had read the letter she had written Lieutenant Bessington, and knew her motive for writing it. So he was determined to let her eat the fruit from the tree which she had planted months and months ago.

Left alone, who can tell the joy of their meeting, the transcendent pleasure of looking into Walla's eyes and the unbounded glory of knowing that she was alive and loved him with so great a love as to risk her life and give up everything that is dear to a woman to make the sacrifice to follow him overseas in order to be always near him.

Walla was silent, but the whole world of love was written in her large, dark eyes, slumbrous, inscrutable, their heavy lashes making shadows on her soft brown cheeks; unresisting, motionless, were the lips now that had spoken so many tantalizing things in the past which annoyed and startled Gastonia. Still he had remained unsuspecting all the while, yet we will wonder how at times he could have failed to recognize Sam as the woman whom he had loved so devotedly. Well, the truth remains unchanged that "love makes a fool of a man, but a woman sobers him up," and to sum up the whole matter, a woman usually proves herself the manager of the man whether by her wiles or her virtues, but more often by her virtues.

Lieutenant Bessington looked at her as if half in fear that she might prove to be something unreal. Was it a dream, and would he awake on his cot to find that he was there without his limb and Walla lost to him forever?

He raised himself upon his cot, sitting upright, he put forth a hand to touch her brown hand which lay limp on her knee. She looked into his eyes and smiled tenderly. "Yes, all this surprise and fascination were real; Walla was alive, breathing, and her eyes told him that he was her lover and lord." The mystery died from his eyes, as he caught her hand in his well hand, and she said:

"Gastonia, I am yours, all yours; suffering has made us to know each other as we may never have done if we had been spared

the tortures of this great war in which you have been made a great hero and my Black American." She reached out her hand to him, but neither of them could move near enough to the other's side to embrace each other as they desired to. Walla laughed, and said:

"Love means to be clasped, to be close, to be touching, to be one. But I fear that we may have to ask the aid of a specialist in this case. Do you not think so, my Black American?"

Love is for us, Gastonia, who came together so unexpectedly at college, and who have meant so much to each other during our stay in the army, even though you did not know who I was, still there were times when I could detect that your life would be lonely without me. Now you have me always; I give you my dowry, which is all I possess, my love and my whole being belongs to you."

"And we will rear our children up to be little Black Americans, will we not, dearest of wives?" Walla blushed, but bowed her head in acquiescence.

THE END.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
00022277212